



MATINGAS

TIJUANA ADVENTURE

Confessions of a Tour Guide

Matingas

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FOREWORD

I often call Zona Norte in Tijuana “the asshole of the world” because it can be the most disgusting place on the planet, but everyone loves a great butt. I’m aware there are other such assholes in the world like in other seedy cities in Southeast Asia, but this asshole is particularly close to America. Forgotten by Mexico’s centralized government, Tijuana was bred and raised to be San Diego and Los Angeles’ asshole. It’s a bizarre, popular city that is often misconstrued and wrongly cited in popular media.

Bender Rodríguez, the Futurama robot, was born in Tijuana. In the year 3,000, Tijuana is still depicted as a shitty, violent town with mud houses and cacti.

Tijuana.

It just has a nice dangerous ring to it.

Tijuana.

It calls for adventure. For anything that can happen. A place to risk it all.

Double or nothing. Fuck it. You’ll never come back anyway.

Tijuana.

A city with cheap tacos and even cheaper beer.

Tijuana.

Chances are that you could have the best or worst time of your life. Flip the coin and find out.

Tijuana.

You can tell your friends you visited just for the glory of it. How brave of you to cross the border into a shitty city where millions are decapitated by narcos for no reason as soon as you enter.

Tijuana.

A city that has the infrastructure of a five-year-old attempting to play SimCity.

Tijuana.

The lawless city where everyone is corrupt and drugs are easy to find.

Tijuana.

A multiverse hidden underneath the skirts of San Diego.

There are thousands of stories written about this border city. And thousands more are missing.

Here is mine.

CHAPTER 1: HOW IT CAME TO BE

I remember exactly when I said to myself “Tijuana Adventure!” That’s what I will call my touring company. I wanted something obvious. Something stupid. Something easy to Google. Almost every city has a tour named “CITY adventure”. For fuck’s sake, there’s a website called urbanadventures.com and it links you to guides in any city. Sort of like an Airbnb but for tour guides.

I didn’t know about that website when I thought of the name.

It was around 7:20 p.m. on a Thursday in January of 2012. I had only been living in Tijuana for a couple of months. I stumbled out of Zona Norte after a crazy night in the red light district. I searched my pockets and found I had \$37 in my hoodie. I reached for my cell phone and called Brown, my first Tijuana friend. I had to tell him about the night. I had my first extreme Tijuana Adventure.

What happens in Zona Norte can be fucking insane. It’s Vegas on steroids except much cheaper and with less regulation. It’s the happiest or saddest place in the world depending on who you are. And I’ve been a tour guide of that area and greater Tijuana since then.

It’s been more than six years of exploring Tijuana, bringing with me strangers from around the world. Organizing bachelor parties and getting paid for it. And now I write this. Half a decade of experiences of a Tijuana tour guide. Most memorable experiences. The highlights. Including my own.

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I was a tour guide before I was officially a tour guide. I was a tour guide before living or knowing Tijuana all that well.

I started visiting in early 2010 when my middle brother moved there from San Diego. I moved to Los Angeles with my oldest brother in 2008 after college. I would visit my middle brother in San Diego frequently. Pacific Beach, to be more precise. Fresh out of college and PB go well together.

I didn’t know of the existence of Tijuana nor did I care back then. I had no interest in visiting. I didn’t know it was that close to the border. It simply didn’t exist. And suddenly, my brother decided to move there because he had fallen in love with a Tijuana girl.

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Tijuana is not Mexico.

I realized that on my second visit. Or at least, it was not the Mexico I grew up with. I spent my childhood and most of my teenage years in the city of Querétaro in central Mexico, until my senior year of high school when I moved to the Midwest (Michigan for high school, Minnesota for college.)

Tijuana is nothing like the rest of Mexico. It’s dumb how I noticed it. It was in the front room of La Mezcalera bar. Sublime’s *Santeria* was playing on the jukebox and everyone in the bar sang it with no accent.

My first visit involved going to a bar called Red Lion. Who knows if that place still exists. It was merely an okay experience. It was cheap, which was a plus. But it was a shitty bar. Apparently, my sister-in-law heard that we were preppy and thought that would be the appropriate choice. It wasn’t.

I hated Tijuana.

It was nowhere as cool as Los Angeles. And I revered LA back then. I loved it so much that I have a half-sleeve tattoo of Venice Beach, where I first surfed (and did horrible.)

In 2011, I did a road trip through the United States visiting friends, family, and strangers through Couchsurfing and Craigslist. I started in Los Angeles and covered Las Vegas, Denver, West Des Moines, Detroit, Kalamazoo, back to Detroit, Chicago,

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Minneapolis, through North Dakota straight to Miles City, Montana (weird place), Spokane, Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, back to Seattle, Eugene, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and back to Los Angeles.

I was not the same when I got back. LA lost its appeal. It was fake. It was meaningless. And I hated my job.

I stopped my job as a paparazzo in May of 2012. Yes. That was my job. I had no desire to stay in Los Angeles. I had no desire to settle anywhere. I wanted to travel the world. Be rid of all my shitty possessions. I stayed in Los Angeles for a few more months deciding what to do and doing light freelance work. Wasting my savings.

I went to my friend's wedding in Montreal that summer. That further convinced me to move from Los Angeles.

With nowhere to go. I ended up in a house in Rancho Peñasquitos in the Northern San Diego area. I wanted a place to stay for my brother's wedding that year but I definitely did not want to move to Tijuana.

I moved to a shitty four bedroom house with three roommates. I paid \$560 a month for the small room. I was going to grow marijuana legally, sell to dispensaries, go back to music school, be a guitarist. What I always wanted to do.

One of the roommates had two weird cats and she was a bit odd herself. The other was an alcoholic libertarian obsessed with guns and drinking shots of Karkov every morning before going to work. He went through a 1.75-liter bottle every two or three days and twice that on the weekends. The last roommate was a country boy who lost his parents at an early age. I thought we weren't going to get along, but he was the

niciest of all three. And he had an awesome dog and cat.

Rancho PQ is basically as far away from downtown San Diego as downtown Tijuana. I started to frequent la ciudad whenever I could.

That house in Rancho PQ ended in ruins. The weird roommate and the libertarian one betrayed the other two as they secretly moved out and left us a messy place with no chance to get other roommates or come to an agreement. I had to move out, quick.

I crossed the border with all my shit and left it in my brother's place in Tijuana. Then I flew back to my hometown in Querétaro to explore my future there. My parents were still living there.

I saw no future there. It was boring. Dull. A place to retire or start a family. Not a place to move after Los Angeles.

I ended up in a one-bedroom apartment in Tijuana behind taco street (a place named Las Ahumaderas) for \$350 a month. The landlord of the building was a friend of my brother's who, back then, worked in a call center in San Diego, commuting daily across the border.

That was my plan. To do the daily commute across the border. It was too much for me. The border waits were over two hours long and I wasn't landing any proper jobs in San Diego. I was running out of money and ended up selling my car for \$6,600 USD. That lasted me for a half year of doing absolutely nothing in Tijuana but getting constantly lost in the city and in my head.

25 years old and I had no idea what to do next.

CHAPTER 2: FIRST TIME IN HONG KONG, TIJUANA

I started doing Tijuana tours before I moved to Tijuana. I remember thinking that my brother was crazy for moving from San Diego to the shittiness of Teejay. As mentioned, the first bar that my sister-in-law took me was a horrible preppy bar called Red Lion. It was shitty, but beers were cheap as fuck. I was disappointed but intrigued. Nothing dangerous ever happened, which was my main concern. The only thing that was scary was hearing police sirens and seeing police trucks rushing down the street on a group of four or more, running the traffic lights.

Tijuana is the ugliest city I've ever been to, even uglier than Pachuca. My sister-in-law got infuriated by that comment. But it is. Even now that I have grown to love it, it's an ugly fucking city.

Streets crisscross randomly and traffic signals tend to not work, there's garbage everywhere, people are constantly out on the street doing nothing, the whole city smells, at night there is little to no light, the neighborhoods make no sense, big luxurious houses are next to poor looking shacks. It's a shithole.

But I kept visiting my brother, and escaping to have my own Tijuana Adventures here and there.

• • •

I remember the first time I walked into Hong Kong, Tijuana's most luxurious strip club.

It's more luxurious now than what it was back then. The city has changed so much in so little time.

My co-brother-in-law took me to my first strip club ever, and HK is much more than that. It was after a game of bowling with the family. We had been drinking and my co-brother and I stayed longer in the bowling alley by ourselves drinking more. I told him I wanted to check it out... The Zonaja.

His eyes lit up. Let's do it.

Going to Hong Kong is a crazy experience. And taking people there for the first time is like introducing them into a new world that you didn't know could be possible. It's like walking into the internet. Your desires materialize in front of you, except the porn isn't free.

I didn't have much money with me on my first visit. But I was still visiting from Los Angeles where everything was expensive. Paying \$3-4 per beer with naked women all around was nothing. Buying my co-brother some beers was no problem either.

"Give me a dollar," he said as soon as we walked in.

Two naked girls covered in shaving cream were right at the entrance. The layout back then was different, but the "show de espuma" is still as prevalent as ever.

My co-brother slid a dollar in between one of the girls legs while looking at me.

HOLY FUCK! You can touch their pussy with just one dollar.

"Go ahead, your turn," the girl looked at me with her legs spread.

One dollar gone. One pussy touched.

Two dollars gone. The other pussy touched.

I didn't have that many singles. That was my first impression at my first strip club ever. One more beer and let's go. I couldn't deal with what my eyes were seeing. I don't remember what else we did that night. But I remember I didn't have more than \$40 and that went quick.

I've been to those places so many times now...

CHAPTER 3: SHAUN AND MIKE

Disclaimer: Those aren't their real names. I don't remember their real names. I don't really remember how I met them. They were friends of friends of my brother's friends... Something like that.

Let's just call them Shaun and Mike. They looked like a Shaun and a Mike. Two white dudes. Both certified pilots out of work. One lived in Hawaii, the other in San Francisco or somewhere in the area. Because of pilot bullshit, they weren't allowed to smoke weed. So they were smoking K-2 incense crap.

Mike was a short guy, typical surfer dude who looked mega stoned all the time and said funny shit, sort of like like Adam DeVine from Workaholics. Shaun was taller and a bit more serious, very more pilot looking than Mike, somewhat like Michael Fassbender.

. . .

Rewind.

This was early 2010. I didn't live in Tijuana. I lived in LA. This was one of my first experiences in Tijuana with two strangers and me acting as a guide though I didn't know the city at all. Crazy shit happened.

Shaun and Mike took me surfing for the first time in my life. We went somewhere south of Rosarito to a completely empty beach where we paid \$5 to park, used their restrooms, and basically enjoy the beach.

We smoked tons of that K-2 bullshit.

It would have been way dumb to go. But nothing happened. I didn't catch one single wave while Mike caught several and Shaun did his best (didn't do that good

either.)

It was a great experience. I fucking loved it.

. . .

Fast forward a bit. I started surfing every day that year in Los Angeles. Fast forward to now. I haven't surfed in years and a lesbian stole my surfboard and my skateboard, my wetsuit, and my favorite scarf.

Rewind again.

. . .

After surfing, we returned to my brother's house. He was living by himself in the same house he lives in now, except it was a very run-down house back then. My brother was practically new to Tijuana as well. The place barely had any furniture and the carpet was old and dirty.

Again, not sure who these guys were or how they related to my brother, but they were staying there. Friends of friends of friends passing out on unknown floors.

I lived in a fantasy apartment complex in Los Angeles in a place called Mariners Village south of Venice in Marina del Rey. The place had small streams and ponds, koi fish and turtles right under my balcony, four pools, four tennis courts, two hot tubs, a gym, a Starbucks, a library, common areas, and much more.

The complex was fantastic, but I shared a three-bedroom with two roommates who were cool, but the apartment itself wasn't huge. It was over \$3k, so split into three we were paying just over \$1k to live in that crazy complex. It was worth it. I'm pretty sure they are more expensive now.

So naturally, my brother didn't mind switching apartments with me. That was one of those times. My brother and his girlfriend (now wife) went to stay at my apartment. I stayed with Shaun and Mike in Tijuana.

Back then, Tijuana was trying to implement the rule that all bars close at 2:00 a.m.

It was weird and it only lasted a couple of months. But for those couple of months, they were adamant about everything closing exactly at 2:00 a.m.

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I'm sure there were many after parties and whatnot. But I was new in the city and I didn't know anyone.

I don't remember how the night started. Probably with something basic in Calle Sexta. Both Shaun and Mike wanted to hit on Mexican girls, but their attempts were not very good. I have a small memory of Shaun getting rejected in La Estrella. But that's not what's important in this story.

All I remember was that I was excited to go to Zona Norte and guide them with my little knowledge of the place.

Back to Hong Kong. To the wonder emporium sex palace of depravity.

Nervous as fuck. Even nowadays that I'm used to the area. I get nervous as fuck when stepping in the timeless wormhole.

As soon as we walked in, Mike disappeared. Like an expert in brothels, he went around doing his thing. I stayed back with Shaun and hung out buying girls drinks having fun here and there.

After a couple of beers, Mike returned. He had already been with a girl and wanted to go get another. Shaun said it was his turn and for Mike to have a beer with me.

Shaun took the girl he was with up to the hotel.

Mike stayed for almost no time before he was up again wandering the brothel for another girl.

I was by myself.

Not only was I by myself... I suddenly had horrible diarrhea.

And I also felt responsible for the guys.

Fuckers don't speak any Spanish, but I guess they were adults responsible for their shit.

I stayed waiting for them. Got another beer. An older woman kept looking at me.

She grabbed my ass when I walked in front of her.

"Vamos güerito, buy her a drink already," said her friend.

Fuck it. Might as well.

Her super stupid fake name was Kristofer. She had been working there for a couple of years. She was much older than me and had an insanely fake body. Fake nose.

Fake tits. Fake ass. As fake as it could be. The opposite of what I'm usually attracted to, but she was completely naked wearing only lime green fishnets.

She told me stories about the place while trying to convince me to go up to the hotel with her. I'm proud to say my will is still strong when it comes to this shit. I still refuse. Paying for sex is weird.

But I still asked how much.

\$60.

HAH! No. I'll buy you another drink instead.

Another beer.

Ok.

\$40.

I refused again.

"\$20, just because I like you," she says. "Plus the cost of the hotel."

My stomach was churning. I was in pain. Mike and Shaun were nowhere to be found.

I confessed.

I wanted to go up to the hotel. Not for the reasons she thought. But because I wanted a private bathroom for myself. It was that bad.

And yes, they have nice bathrooms in Hong Kong, but this was bad. And I'm stupid when it comes to taking a shit in public restrooms. I prefer the comfort of my own.

I asked Kristofer what way to the hotel. She guided me and left before she put on her bathrobe. Told her to wait for me.

I paid \$12 for 30 minutes in a sex hotel just to take a comfortable shit.

The hotel was under construction so it was a weird walk to the room and I could hear fucking in all the rooms.

There was porn on TV as soon as I walked in. Ran to the bathroom. Did my things. Took a long warm shower. Cooled my head down. And headed back out. To search for Mike and Shaun.

I didn't find them.

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I found Kristofera again. She made fun of my situation. Called me “strange” several times. We got along. She tried to help me look for Mike and Shaun. So I bought her more drinks and gave her a \$20 tip.

2:00 a.m. hit.

Everyone was getting kicked out of the bars. I said bye and thanks to Kristofera. And I ended up adding her on Facebook. I still have her to this day. Her name is not Kristofera. It's something very common. And yes. She is old with a very fake body. The lights at Hong Kong and booze does wonders to the imagination.

She's still cool. Last time I talked to her she was still working in the area. I saw her a couple times after... Always bought her a drink and talked to her a bit. She stopped trying to get me to the rooms after that one time.

The streets were a mess. Crazy amounts of people just wandering Tijuana past 2:00 a.m. searching for anything that is open, but nothing is except 24 hour *farmacias*.

Shaun and Mike were nowhere to be found. I walked around for several minutes looking for them. I was tired. I was ready to give up and go home. They can figure out what to do. They are adults. They can stay at a hotel.

And then... I fucking finally found them. Both of them together.

Yep. They did their thing. They got kicked out 2:00 a.m. as well. They miraculously found each other and then found me.

The night didn't end there.

Everything was closed, and Mike still insisted that he wanted to get with a Mexican chick. Not with a prostitute, but a real one. But still offering money. Makes no sense to me, but fuck it.

He ended up chatting with two short, stocky girls that weren't very pretty... but really common Mexican ladies. Somehow he convinced them to have sex with him and Shaun for \$50 each.

Nothing was opened. These were just girls. We walked all the way back to my

brother's place.

On the long walk there, the girls complained about how much we were walking. And we did. We walked shit-tons, nearing 3:00 a.m. Two crazy fucking white Gringos smoking K-2, two random girls, and Me. Looking back, a taxi would have been an easy choice.

Shit felt weird. Not sure how or why I agreed to this.

I talked to the girls. They worked at a strip club called El Culpio. They were hookers... both 21-years-old. One had three kids, the other had none. They were best friends and did everything together. They explained more of what happens in Zona Norte.

I told Mike that he was unsuccessful in getting real girls to get with him. He didn't believe me. He was convinced that they weren't prostitutes.

At my brother's place, they did their thing in the dirty old carpet in the living room with no furniture.

I went to bed. Or tried to. I heard the girls getting a taxi 20 minutes later.

The next morning, we had tacos for breakfast and they went back across the border. I never saw either of them ever again. I never smoked K-2 ever again.

The girls...

Eight years later, I still see both girls together on occasion. Usually on Sundays at Bar Chips. But sometimes randomly. I'm not sure if they are the same girls, but they look exactly like my memory of them. And they seem to look at me like they recognize me but they are not sure who I am. And I look at them thinking they were those two random girls that Mike picked up.

I never really told that story before. Not to this extent. I didn't imagine I would end up living in Tijuana. I didn't imagine my brother would get married and still live in the same house. The dirty old carpet is gone. The house looks nothing like it used to.

And now years later... Sorry bro. I truly am.

CHAPTER 4: DIARIES OF A DIRTY OLD MAN

This is starting to sound like the stereotypical dirty Tijuana diary. Yes. I'm going to write more about hoes.

Hoes. I feel dirty calling them that. And very misogynistic. Prostitutes sound worse. Bitches sound like fun. Bitches and hoes.

There are a lot in Tijuana. All kinds.

I haven't visited those places in almost a year.

For this story, I was still a Zona Norte rookie. I sort of understood the complexities of it but also didn't know much outside Adelitas Bar and Hong Kong.

I still lived in L.A. I still acted as a tour guide despite not knowing the city. And it's another adventure again with friends of friends of my brother.

I believe this happened with Andy and Spencer. They had a band back in the day called HFICLSI (pronounced haifa-colasai). I still have that album. I still enjoy that album. It's a wreckless, dirty attempt at mathy post-hardcore a la The Blood Brothers. A lot of jerky guitar riffs, heavy drumming, and crazy yelping. I'm playing it on iTunes right now.

Anyway...

I was out with those kids in Tijuana. I hung out with them a lot in San Diego before, so again, I don't remember how things started, I just know we ended up in Zona Norte.

I went out with Andy and Spencer, probably to a show or something similar in

Tijuana. After that, we decided to venture into Zona Norte with little money.

We started at Adelitas Bar which is way more calm of a strip club than Hong Kong and I sort of prefer that.

We went straight to an empty table at the left of the entrance. Naked girl dancing on stage. Naked women everywhere. And one of them was basically on our table.

It was some sort of booth-type table and the girl's ass was literally hovering over my right shoulder facing the other way, sitting on the booth part. I looked at the guys like, "heyyyy check it out, naked ass right here."

The girl saw me checking her out and immediately jumped on my lap.

Yep. Had to buy her a drink.

She said I looked like a stoner. I admitted that I was. I told her that I had some California kush better than anything she'll find in Tijuana and we started talking about that.

She gestured for her friend to come over. The girl sat between both my friends but it was somewhat awkward and they weren't feeling her style. I stayed talking to that girl who didn't move from my lap. The guys wanted out. I told them to hold on.

Another beer.

The girls told us that it was their time to dance. They got up and went to the dressing room. Before that, the girl I was with told me that she was going to give me her Facebook name and phone number.

The guys wanted out again. I told them I'll meet them in Hong Kong.

I waited alone while I saw the two girls dance in the general stage. I threw a couple dollars their way.

Then they went back to the dressing room.

And I waited.

And waited.

To the point I was like, fuck this, she's not going to come out and give me her Facebook. I got up to leave.

I saw her rushing from the back, she grabbed me by the hand and pulled me back into the club before I could exit. Then she had me walk with her. She told me the club

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frowns upon the girls giving their numbers away and sneakily gave me a piece of paper to open later.

I left Adelita Bar with her Facebook and phone number. Her Facebook name was something along the lines of “psycho NAME chick.”

I added her later that night. And this story does not end in this chapter.

Went to find the guys in Hong Kong. I was done for the night. I was running out of money and I was already happy with a new contact that I made. And I showed off the contact as if I had struck gold. A hooker's phone number. How fun. She wanted to smoke and drink with me, and not in a bar. Or so I thought.

They were also running out of money but wanted more and more. We stayed for a couple of beers. They bought a girl a drink.

Not really a girl. More like an older woman.

She was by far one of the least attractive women in the whole club. But apparently, affordable. Because the guys bought her just a couple of drinks and then horny fucks were all over the girl. Like both. Together. Just grabbing her here and there. Andy was trying to kiss her. She was not allowing him. But touching her anywhere was

fine. And they kept doing it.

It was... gross.

And at the same time hilarious.

I tried to look away.

But if your vision wanders in places like this, you'll end up locking eyes with a girl, she'll end up in your lap again.

It's impossible to look away in these places.

I've tried staring at the TV to distract myself.

Impossible. Eventually, titties or asses will block your view.

I'm pretty sure the TVs are there just for that. To look at something when you are not trying to get a girl. But they don't work.

The guys ran out of money. The ugly older woman got up and left. I told them it was time to call it a night. And so we did.

Out of money. Out of luck. Done.

The rest of the story of the psycho chick comes later.

CHAPTER 5: MOVING TO TIJUANA, FIRST APARTMENT AND FIRST TJ GIRLFRIEND

My editor has me working on a story about the morgue of Tijuana. I would have never imagined I would be doing that years after arriving here. Obsessed with the city and constantly writing about it. And making some money doing it. No. I hated it. That's how it all started.

After quitting my job in Los Angeles as a paparazzo. Yes... That's another book that was never a book, but more of a blog that evolved into a daily word vomit. I wrote shit exactly like this. But a lot of it. That's my page. Matingas.com. Follow the link to the word vomit. 460+ posts about my life and 100+ about encounters with celebrities.

I quit my job as a paparazzo. I was tired of it and I got demoted from staff at LAX to freelance on the streets (more money possibilities, but harder work.) I didn't want to work doing that anymore, but I didn't know anything better. I started when I was 21. It was my first job and I was making way too much money for being so young and not really understanding money.

I quit when I was 25 after going on a long-ass road trip through the US. When I got back to Los Angeles, I realized I didn't want to live there anymore. I didn't want to continue as a paparazzo.

So I moved out.

It took two trips to fill my 2006 grey Mazda 6, named Eddie, with all my shit and

moved to Tijuana. Surfboard, mattress, longboard, three guitars, 42" inch TV, 27" iMac, shitty IKEA desk, all my clothes, the paparazzi magazines, and lots of other bullshit that I carry when I move.

My first apartment was in la Colonia Cacho. My brother hooked me up with a friend of his whose mother owned the building. The apartment was a one-bedroom for \$350. I was paying \$560 for one room in San Diego.

This was way better. And I still had some savings.

No job. I never wanted a job.

I had a few interviews in San Diego. They would give me the job and tell me to show up at a certain hour at someplace.

I wouldn't show up.

This happened three times.

They were shitty jobs that I didn't want to do.

It's hard to do a shitty job when I used to run around taking pictures of celebrities and making money. It's hard to do a shitty job when I've been getting paid to write. And I write this without knowing if I'm going to get paid.

Let's hope I am. Right?

And so I spent my first few months in Tijuana locked in my apartment, waiting for the internet to arrive, playing guitar. Scared of the city. Scared of where I was. Lonely.

Very lonely.

I didn't know anyone except my co-brother-in-law. And he was a punk rock student living not that close and with absolutely no money.

That's how people live in Tijuana.

On the edge. With no money. Just enough for the next beer and hopefully the next taco.

That's what I ended up doing.

I sold my car to pay for rent.

I sold my car to pay stupid shit I should have canceled. An expensive Verizon Wireless smartphone that didn't even have a signal in Mexico. A Droid 2. The early generations of smartphones. I was still paying my student loans and other shit that I should have not been paying while not producing any money.

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My expenses were over \$1,000 a month without generating any money and eating and drinking outside often. That's all the money you need in TJ. \$1,000 a month.

And I sold my car for \$6,600.

Those were my first 6 months in Tijuana. Nothing but spending the money I made from the car.

Coffee shops during the day. Going to punk shows or going to Chips Bar at night. Mostly depressed. Not knowing what I was going to do next. No job. No hopes. Just wanted to drink endlessly.

And then I met her.

At a punk show.

Chita.

Punk shows kept me alive in Tijuana. The music scene was very unique. And because of my co-brother-in-law, I was friends with many of the bands like DFMK and San Pedro el Cortez. That's not saying much. They are only famous here.

And it was a DMKF show when I met her.

My days were spent at Café Diógenes. Two recent philosophy grads had a bookstore/coffee shop that was a complete disaster. I worked there for free because they could not afford employees and they couldn't afford to work in the shop.

I worked there for coffee and to have a place to hang out.

I didn't know anyone.

I didn't meet her there. But we did meet there. She was in college and enjoyed the philosophical grungy feel of the cafe. Everyone did. And no one paid for coffee.

Yep. That coffee shop didn't last long.

But it was at the punk show when she landed in my arms and stared into my eyes.

I've never been very good with women. They more often come to me than I to them.

She landed in my arms.

Nothing came of that night. My drummer friend told me that she liked me after we parted ways. And we added each other on Facebook. I don't remember our first kiss. It had to be at another punk show where we got too drunk and things happened.

I don't remember much of the relationship except it was a turbulent one and everyone hated us together. We did nothing but fight. Get drunk. Have wild sex. And fight some more.

We were problematic together.

I was without direction and turning into an alcoholic.

She was a depressed mess.

Once she came to the front of my apartment completely wasted, with her skirt torn and black makeup running down her cheeks. I let her in. She walked into the bedroom and passed the fuck out without saying much.

I told her she couldn't do that anymore. Not with me. Not like this.

It happened several more times.

The worst was when she got a bottle of liquid Clonazepam (Rivotril/Klonopin.) She brought it to my apartment excitedly and I kept an open mind. We took some together. Had some drinks. Did stupid shit. Really stupid shit.

I remember her skating in the apartment naked. I remember almost burning the kitchen. I remember we drank more than we should have. And I remember she went crazy and said she wanted to kill herself.

She wanted to drink the whole bottle of Clonazepam.

I took it from her and hid in my closet.

We fought some more.

Then had violent sex.

And I fell asleep.

I woke up in the middle of the night still drowsy to go take a piss. I found her next to the toilet with a bloody lip and bloodstains on the edge of the toilet and on the floor.

I freaked out and carried her to bed. She was alive. She was breathing. But unconscious.

I found the bottle of Clonazepam empty in the same place I left it in the closet. I did a shit job at hiding it.

She tried to kill herself in my apartment.

I spent all night until the crack of dawn reading online on what to do. Dialed for an ambulance a couple of times, but hung up before they could answer.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

How am I going to explain that there's an unconscious woman on my bed with a bloody lip on my bed?!

I messaged my doctor friend to call me. It was an emergency.

He called me 10 minutes after I sent him the message.

I explained the situation and he calmed me down. Everything was going to be fine. She was going to be okay.

Miss you Che. You helped me a lot that day. Miss you every fucking day. My doctor friend is now gone.

That should have been the end of it... And I still saw her after that.

Our final encounter was a dumb one. We were still dating despite it all. Everyone hated us together. The relationship was beyond toxic. Everything turned into a fight.

The final fight was over a game of chess in which she won. I told her I thought I was going to win because I had the advantage, I had captured more pieces than she had. It was a genius checkmate and I praised her for that. But she wouldn't budge on why I thought I had the advantage. I tried to reason with basic math. But she wouldn't reason with me.

Or so it felt like.

It escalated so quickly, so dumb.

I kicked her out of my apartment after the stupid fight.

We never talked again.

I've seen her multiple times since. I still see her in the street every once in a while.

We ignore each other.

We have never talked again. I'm sorry for all that happened. I never wanted it to end like it did. It was bad for both of us.

But it's for the best to pretend that we don't exist.

• • •

And I can't stop pretending that my job doesn't exist. I told my editor I'll have the next story ready by the end of the week. I already nailed an interview and translated it. I just need to do the legwork.

I don't want to.

I want to keep writing stupid shit that happened in my past.

And much more happened in the past.

But I need to go back to the morgue and analyze the details. Write the story. Get to work.

CHAPTER 6: LA FRIENDS VISIT. CLASSICAL GUITAR AND FIRST TOURS

Waking up doesn't matter. When you are a freelance writer, time is only a factor when you have a deadline. And I have none.

I set one for myself. I have to finish that morgue article by early tomorrow.

It's going. It's not my favorite. But it's going. I should finish it after this. After some breakfast.

. . .

Before moving to Tijuana in 2012, I left all my shit at my brother's house and flew to Querétaro to visit my parents who still lived in my hometown. I also went to check out if moving back there was a possibility and to see old friends.

Fuck no. It wasn't a possibility.

I haven't been back since then. It's been over 6 years. My parents moved over to Tijuana shortly after I decided I wasn't moving back.

There was nothing there for me. All the jobs sucked. Most of my friends were married and with kids.

Absolutely fucking nothing. Boring town.

Also, Xolos de Tijuana played Gallos Blancos de Querétaro the weekend I was there, and my hometown lost. That just reaffirmed what I already knew. I'm staying in

Tijuana.

Not to mention that I was still used to America and I didn't want to move that far from the US. Thus, my days of Tijuana began.

I did nothing for months. I had the fantasy of living with my classical guitar degree. I practiced daily. I set up lessons at Café Diógenes. I was a cheap fucking bastard charging 50 pesos per half an hour. That quickly increased to 100 pesos when I realized that I was actually good at giving lessons. I had five students that I saw every week. The youngest was 7 and he was learning nothing. The oldest was 50+ and was loving every lesson. There were a couple of younger guys that were also liking the lessons.

It never went anywhere. I stopped giving lessons after a few months.

I also started going to fine dining restaurants to ask if I could play there. Most shut me down.

It was the Marriott Hotel that offered me to play in the lobby for \$40 + tips for 4 hours. I took it.

I never made much money with my guitar. So that was great.

I did a couple of gigs in San Diego for a similar price. I also tried getting classical guitar gigs in fine dining places in the US. With no car or gear, it was impossible. Not to mention that the competition is pretty stiff.

The first day that I got to the Marriott, no one told them that a guitarist would be playing in the lobby.

It was a mess.

I played there for a month. It was always a mess. But I fared well enough. I would get a free meal and play my set three or four times. Basically, just practiced.

Old people were lovely. An older woman sat with her husband and listened to me for more than 20 minutes. They gave me \$20 dollar tip and told me I was wonderful.

That was probably the best that came from playing at the Marriott.

After a month, they didn't want to pay me anymore. So I left.

Back to nothing.

I spent my days counting the rest of my savings from the car I sold. Avoiding work or getting a job. Sort of like I'm doing now. Living with the bare minimum. Depressed. Lonely. Doing absolutely nothing but waiting till I ran out of money.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

The only joy came when friends from LA visited. And that was very limited.

It was the brothers, Hudson and Penner, who were my first somewhat customers. Hudson was going through a divorce while Penner was going through marriage problems since his wife decided to be a heavy girl pornstar and have an open relationship.

Yep.

Both going through weird shit.

Hudson and Penner were my best friends in Los Angeles. Hudson and I worked together for over a year doing paparazzi business. Penner worked for TMZ and we would also work together often enough.

Hudson had quit his paparazzo job by then and got a job in tech writing code. Penner still worked for TMZ but doesn't anymore.

They visited me a few times. They both already had experience in Tijuana decades before. Everything was different for them. Everything was still pretty new to me.

I had no idea what I was doing. But they liked how I would take them through Tijuana streets, bars, food, and strip clubs.

We ended up in a really shitty strip club on Calle Sexta. That club lasted less than four months before it shut down. There was no one there but ghetto-looking waiters and four half-naked girls... and of course us.

They gave us tequila shots and beers for cheap. Girls danced in the vicinity and, though they were gross, we were having a fun time. I was hanging out with my best friends in a shithole in Tijuana. And they were paying for everything.

We moved to different bars, a punk show, and to other strip clubs.

Back in early 2012, there wasn't much in the city but that. Especially downtown Tijuana. The city was still trying to define itself. It was mostly abandoned except for cheap clubs and shitty dive bars. It's not what it is now.

So much changed in a few years.

There are so many craft breweries now. And I barely, almost never, go to strip clubs.

• • •

Hudson and Penner wouldn't recognize this Tijuana anymore. They haven't visited since then. I visited Hudson in Los Angeles a couple years ago, and we still talk. I should visit him in LA soon again.

Hudson got remarried again, this time to an Australian woman who cooks amazing. They seem happy. Their excuse for not coming down is that they were waiting for the marriage papers to confirm the Aussie so she can travel out of the US.

I'm not sure what their excuse is now. But I am for sure due for a trip to Los Angeles. It's been over a year since I've visited.

I hate LA. But it's always good just for a visit.

Especially to hang out with Hudson.

• • •

That night, while having a cigarette outside a bar, this cute girl with freckles all over her face and really curly black hair came up to me drunkenly and said, "ay tink choo are the lov of ma laif."

SCORE!

If you can't read that. She said, "I think you are the love of my life."

She was cute. Very cute. And she hugged me right away. She was also very drunk.

I played the dumb gringo card and pretended I didn't speak Spanish. She talked to her friends in Spanish about how she wanted to fuck me. This went on for a while until I started laughing. Then I told her in Spanish that I heard everything. She blushed and went back to her friends. Hudson told me I should take her home.

But no. We moved on.

And yes. I did get her Facebook.

The next morning, after partying all night, they were the ones who told me. Hudson and Penner.

"You should do tours," and they insisted on giving me \$100 just for having them over.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

I never saw myself as a tour guide. But they convinced me. And I was running out of money and didn't have a job.

They told me they had one of the best nights they had in a long time and told me they will be back soon. They came twice more. They told a lot of people in LA about Tijuana and other friends from LA ventured down. I started giving tours to my friends free of charge but they would insist on giving me money.

I started laying the foundations for a tour guide website and learning more

about the city and where to take people.

Then I realized there were other tour guides in the city. I asked for a job with one of them. They basically told me to fuck off and I received threats from friends of the other tour guides.

This also inspired to create my own touring website.

All I needed was a name. The rest was basically set.

CHAPTER 7: THE TIJUANA ADVENTURE

Someone was yelling outside my window this morning. It was someone I didn't want to see. I pretended I wasn't home.

The morgue article got accepted. Now I am unsure when it's going to get published.

A cover story that I wrote came out today. It's about a friend who self-deported to Tijuana. His story is yet to come. I wrote his story for the magazine almost 9-months ago. I got paid. I forgot about it. And then I found it was going to be a cover.

Awesome... I guess. It's been so long since I sent it that I feel weird that it ended up being a cover. I like the pictures I took for it. And I like the ones that they used. I grabbed several copies that now sit on my shelf with the other huge stack of magazines that I'm supposedly going to eventually clip to make some sort of scrapbook with all my stories.

• • •

Let's go back to that night that started it all. The one that I mentioned in Chapter 1. Some morning in January in 2012.

My savings account was running low.

Like really low.

To the point that I was eating and drinking really cheap and counting every penny.

I wasn't making any money. I didn't know what I was going to do to make money.

The tours weren't a thing yet. It was just a concept. I didn't have a web page or anything. My first post was a year later.

So what happened the previous night?

How did I end up in Zona Norte on a Tuesday morning with \$37 in my hoodie's right-pocket?

I remember that hoodie. It was one of my favorite hoodies. Green and brown. Thin enough that if it's warm, it's still a wearable hoodie, and if it's chilly, it's still the best hoodie. I miss that hoodie. I'm not sure what happened to that hoodie.

That hoodie witnessed that night.

Remember that girl from Adelitas Bar?

The naked ass hovering over my shoulder?

Yeah. I added her on Facebook.

We never really talked.

I noticed immediately that it said she was in a relationship with someone.

That someone had a friend in common. I asked that friend in common and he said: "that someone is always dating hookers."

Interesting...

I got a message from her. The hooker in a relationship with someone who was friends with a friend of mine.

"I just broke up with my boyfriend, I'm alone with a *cubeta* in *la Malquerida*." That was the message.

Words to explain. Cubeta = bucket. She had a bucket of beers with her. Usually 6, but sometimes 10 or 12.

Malquerida = the name of a strip club near Adelitas and Hong Kong.

It's a good strip club though people have been shot in there. It's nice and clean and the beers are cheap. It's more for locals than tourists. It's way more Mexican with a live band, which many times can be amazing.

Back then, La Malquerida was shittier. The second floor was in the process of being rebuilt. So it wasn't as nice. And it was cheap as fuck.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

"You should come to help me drink this beer."

I hesitated.

I was broke. And I told her. I don't really have any money.

I had \$20 with me and some change.

That was it.

I messaged my friend Brown before heading her way. He said, "what the fuck are you waiting for you dumbfuck?!"

I got dressed and headed out the door on those cheap taxis de ruta and walked to La Malquerida. I'm not sure what time it was when I got there but it was a couple hours before midnight.

I got to La Malquerida and she was already a little bit tipsy. We drank and chatted and she complained about life and whatnot. I don't remember much except thinking like "holy shit, drinking for free with a hooker, this is awesome."

She was very flirtatious with me. I just followed her to whatever she wanted. And she wanted me to spend her money on strippers. So I did.

And drank more beers.

Then she took me to the upstairs where the private rooms are, except back then they were under construction, but still somewhat functional.

Hey.

It was shittier. I told you.

We went into one of the private rooms and she lit up a joint. We smoked together while she gave me a private dance.

It didn't escalate to anything except to just having fun.

We left the private room and finished the bucket of beers and walked outside.

As we stumbled outside La Malquerida, she mentioned she's never been in Hong Kong.

I asked why not? And she didn't have an answer, except: "let's go."

. . .

I said this was going to be diaries of an old man. I should censor myself. And I have shit to do, stupid errands. I should reconsider typing what I was about to type.

Somehow. I've convinced a lot of women to sleep with me.

CHAPTER 7.5: HONG KONG WITH PSYCHO

I did errands and some work and got distracted on purpose because I didn't want to write what I'm going to write.

It's not even that bad. This was years ago. I was 26-year-old and was YOLOing harder than ever.

. . .

We entered Hong Kong drunk and high at around 2 a.m. on a Tuesday. The place was not as lively as it usually is. Still, a lot of naked women everywhere, but not the insanity of weekends in the sex emporium.

Before we even found a place to sit, psycho chick was saying hello to some women excitedly. She knew a lot of the dancers but didn't know they worked there or never saw them work. She ordered a bucket of beer and gave me a \$20.

Then she said, "wait, I'll be back."

The bucket of beer arrived and she was nowhere. There goes not only the \$20 she gave me, but the only \$20 I had that was supposed to last me more than a few days.

First beer out of ten and I'm sitting in Hong Kong by myself with no money. Trying not to look at all the naked women around me because as soon as you give them eye contact, they'll approach you.

There's nowhere to look.

Stimulation overload.

I'm so over it.

For now.

Second beer. I'm drunk as fuck. I don't want to drink anymore. But there's a bucket of beer that I pseudo-paid for so I'm going to drink as much as I can.

Fuck. Third beer. This is boring now.

And suddenly... there she is!

She came back. The psycho chick. With \$400 in her hands.

She handed \$200 to a waiter and told him to break it for singles.

She then handed me a fistful of singles and said: "I want you to spend it on my friends."

Yep.

My luck turned around. Psycho chick just handed me a bunch of money. She was telling her friends to come over and be with me while at the same time she was with me... It was... magical?

But wait. There's more!

Much more...

. . .

Sorry, mom.

. . .

It took us less than an hour to spend a couple hundred. I kissed and touched many naked women while kissing the psycho chick at the same time. And they did the same to me.

The waiters were treating us like royalty as psycho told him to break another \$100 and bring another bucket of beer.

The waiters had no idea psycho chick was also a stripper but just from Adelita's and not Hong Kong. She was dressed in regular clothes. Tight jeans, tennis shoes, a regular shirt, and little makeup.

She gave me a fistful of singles again. Beer was ignored at this point but was still there. And then she decided she wanted to dance on stage.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

Waiters didn't care. The other girls encouraged it. She got up and started stripping for me and for the general audience.

I helped her strip. I started throwing money that she gave me on stage. Took off her jeans and left her with just her panties and put more money as she danced for like another second.

Then she helped me strip.

Then I was on stage.

So there.

Secret out. I had sex with a psycho hooker in public for a moment.

Again, Hong Kong wasn't very lively, so it was just some waiters, other hookers, and a dozen other customers that were entertained by their own naked girls on their laps.

We didn't finish, but I was naked on stage (boxers only) with her totally naked and two other naked girls there. I think I had a moment of consciousness when I was like "dude, you can't keep going." I'm pretty sure we were taking it too far, but at some point, I was on the side of the stage putting my clothes back on.

Her, the same.

The other two girls that were on stage came to us and gave her back some of the money.

And she still had plenty of money.

After what happened, waiters kept treating us like royalty.

They started ushering us into the VIP room where they told us we could keep it going with more girls.

We laughed at each other and said no thanks.

Then they ushered us into some private fancy rooms with a jacuzzi shower with glass windows and four-poster bed with translucent curtains and soft clean sheets. It pretty much looked like a set of a porno. And porno was playing on TV.

Again, we said no thanks.

They tried ushering us to another place that was basically the same, with more promises of girls, champagne, and other VIP treatment.

I think they thought I had the money and not her. Because I kept looking at her

like, "what's your choice."

She again said "no thanks" and that we wanted to go back to the main area.

There we sat with her friends again trying to finish the rest of the bucket of beer.

We didn't finish the beer when she said it was time for tacos.

She handed me the rest of her change. \$50-some dollars. I put them in my right pocket of my favorite green hoodie.

I lost that green hoodie. I miss that green hoodie. That fucking hoodie was perfect.

We stumbled down the street for tacos. It was near dawn. We were beyond wasted. Her more than me. I had time to sober up after the actions occurred.

She got three adobada tacos with everything. At the time, I was a "vegetarian" so I ordered nothing. Also at the time "I would never be with a prostitute." Too late to go back on that one.

I still never have paid any money for it. And I don't think I ever will. So hooray my morals?

She was so drunk that she was eating the paper that came with the taco. I helped her fold the paper back so she wouldn't eat it. Nah. She kept munching on that taco, drunkenly eating the paper and all.

I was hungry, so I grabbed a piece of the meat ever so carefully picking a not so greasy piece that didn't touch the guacamole that was piled on top (I hate that green booger shit.)

Vegetarianism over.

Give me a taco without that green booger shit. Almost ate it paper and all.

I took money out of the right pocket of my beloved green fucking hoodie that I miss so much. Paid the taquero. And down the road, we go to her place.

Her place?

Oh yeah!

There's more!

I said there's more

Her place was Hotel Velario, a hotel near all the prostitutes. And guess what happens in that hotel?

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

It's a really nice standard hotel. She had a room on the bottom floor. The building is weird, sort of a labyrinth that goes down a few floors instead of up.

The room was also pretty standard, except she had all her shit there.

I remember I saw her official ID on the night desk. Shit. I learned her real name and her age. She was 21. I thought she was older than me at the time.

She opened her closet and tried opening her safe to show off her money. She was too drunk to open it. She left her purse and money on top of it.

Then we had sex for hours. For way too many hours.

I was tired. I wanted to sleep.

She wouldn't let me. She wanted more and more and more.

She went to other rooms to show me off.

Other girls that worked with her basically also live in the hotel. The girls would come into her hotel room and play with me.

Yep...

I was so embarrassed. But at the same time YOLOing. She just kept telling girls, "you gotta see this guy's cock. It's perfect."

So more girls kept coming to check it out.

I just wanted to fucking sleep. She wanted more sex and got obsessed with not being able to open her safe.

At some point, she called the front desk to tell them she couldn't open her safe. Security came into the room to help her. Security dude seemed to be friendly with psycho. They couldn't reset the fucking password so they welded that shit down and told her they were going to bring her a new safe.

She had over 20k in cash in the safe.

At some point I did sleep. Because I woke up and suddenly there were several fruit juices JUMEX on the room's table as well as shitty Mexican pastries. At some point, she went to the store and bought breakfast.

I had no idea what time it was.

I slept some more after breakfast. But she kept touching me trying to get my tired penis to do something. I told her I needed sleep. At least a couple hours.

I woke up no idea at what time. She was asleep but felt me waking up.

And started touching me right away.

After what seemed the 7th time I had sex in one day, I left her hotel room.

• • •

This circles back to Chapter 1.

This is when I stumbled out of Zona Norte after the craziest fucking night of my life. I reached for my pocket to call my friend Brown. "Dude, you won't believe what just happened." Those were my first words.

Tijuana happened.

When I was talking to him giving him a rough summary and telling him to meet me for beers soon, I reached inside my right pocket on my fucking beautiful green hoodie.

\$37 dollars.

I told him I'll call him later.

Turned around and headed back to the hotel.

Shit. I didn't know what room she is in. Her first name was very common and I forgot her real last name. I couldn't just ask for "psycho chick."

I turned back around and went back to my place.

I messaged her later that day to let her know that I took some money from her by accident and thanked her for the wild night. She told me not to worry about it and to buy her beer one of these days.

And wait...

There's more...

A month later she texted me that she was pregnant.

CHAPTER 8: LIFE LOW POINTS

I am waiting for nightfall just so I can start drinking. It's Saturday so I don't feel like doing any actual work. I almost didn't do any actual work all week. Just some photography.

The editor forgot to pay me for the morgue story. Rare mistake, he usually pays me quickly. I'll have to wait two more weeks for that money. I should be working on my stories, but I'm not sure what I'm doing or what to start writing next.

So I'll wait for the sun to go away so I can have an excuse to drink. There's a soccer game on TV in a couple hours and I want to watch and use it as an excuse to start drinking, but I can't. I have little family errands to do at the same time. Once I accomplish those, I can start drinking.

Despite not working much, the week was semi-productive. I did photography work more than anything. One paid gig. Two unpaid. The unpaid was photographing pretty girls. I barely just started doing that. I took pictures of many Victoria's Secret models and some of the most beautiful women in the world back in my paparazzo days. But this is different. Much different. And I'm not sure what I'm doing, but I'm having fun.

. . .

If you are wondering.

No. The psycho stripper was not pregnant with my baby.

Turns out she was trying to get pregnant from her boyfriend plenty before. And not only him, but she was also hooking up with an American guy and also trying to get pregnant through him.

Why would anyone want to get pregnant is beyond me. But she was trying.

She tried with me. But I'm not dumb, she had condoms.

This didn't stop her from pinning it on me. I felt horrible. I didn't want a child. Much less with a stripper that I didn't really care much about.

Drama occurred. Obviously. The kid wasn't mine. I did the math.

She was around three weeks pregnant when our encounter happened.

But wait! There's more!

Nah. There's not more. That was the last I heard of her. Until five years later. That's going to come up at some point in these diaries of an old man.

. . .

So back to it.

I was broke. I just had one of the wildest nights of my life. I coined "Tijuana Adventure" because of what happened, even though it's a FUCKING blatantly obvious name.

Now Tijuana Adventure is about craft beer and street eats. I still get bachelor parties and shit gets wild. But that's what the embodiment of Tijuana Adventure is.

It just happens.

The city absorbs you and you have a Tijuana Adventure. My adventure in the city was turning dark.

The stripper wasn't the only Tijuana girl to tell me she was pregnant. Remember the curly haired girl that came over to me and just declared her love?

Well... yeah.

I hooked up with her as well.

Before losing my apartment.

Thing was... she was way too young. She was 18 and still in fucking high school!

And obviously infatuated with me.

She made up the pregnant story and I called her bluff. She showed up in her fucking high school uniform outside my apartment to confess that she had lied.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

Just to be clear, I was 25 at that point. So it wasn't that creepy. Still... 18. Way too young.

I originally met her at a bar. If I meet someone at a bar, I'm hoping they have somewhat a mature mentality. Well... not anymore. I'd rather not meet most people anymore. Her lies were enough for me to not see her again. Fuck this shit. Drama for the sake of drama.

I couldn't pay rent. I had already sold my car. I had no job or prospects for a job. I was losing it all.

My parents moved to Playas de Tijuana a few months after I moved into the city. I got evicted from my apartment. I borrowed my sister-in-law's Jeep and moved all my shit to a small room in a small house at my parents.

Speak about low points in your life... moving back with your parents with no money and no job.

I cramped all my shit in the tiny room in the backyard of my parents'. It was a very small three-bedroom house and I didn't want to be in a bedroom immediately next to my parents.

So I chose a tiny room that wasn't much bigger than a shed. And I locked myself in there.

Decided to become a writer.

I was going to write stories about my time as a paparazzi. But I didn't know how to write at all. I decided a blog would be a good start. And that's when I started writing for the first time. My word vomit. The blog.

I also created the TijuanaAdventure.com page and started working on what would become the tours.

It was bad at the start.

I got some attention from Reddit but a lot of negative reactions as well.

I was just trying to write and make a living with my stories. Silly me.

In less than a week with my parents, I found the motivation to work and get the fuck out. But of course, it wasn't that easy.

It took me around a month to find a job. And I landed exactly what I wanted, a writing/editing gig. They needed cheap writers/editors with decent English and knowledge of soccer.

I knew a bit about soccer, but not enough to be a writer about it. I started studying a lot. Not only the sport but how to write about it.

I was producing over five articles a day about stupid shit. Game reviews. News stories that were just translated from other pages.

Content. Stupid fucking content. And once or twice a week I would get inspired on something. And I would write that something.

Every once in a while, that something was well received. But for the most part, it was just producing constant content on the sport around the globe and updating the website.

I was getting paid \$800 a month for working almost six days a week. It was a few months working from home, then it evolved into going to the office on a daily basis.

After a couple of months on the job and plenty of fights with my father, I was ready to get the fuck out again.

That's when I first moved to downtown Tijuana with a strange girl who I met on the street. She told me her name was Palida Hortaliza which translates to something along the lines of "pale vegetable."

I don't know why I was okay with that. As if that name existed.

She was indeed very pale and had a very weak chin. Almost grandmother-like even though she was very young and as white as a Minnesota chick. Her eyes carried torture and sadness. And she spoke in a weird soft voice with an accent.

Needless to say, that was a mistake. But it was better than my parents.

CHAPTER 9: PALE HAPPINESS

There are three draft emails in my inbox that I have kept for over a year. They are query/pitches to editors at Playboy, the New Yorker, and the Rolling Stone. I never had the balls to send it. I fear both: rejection and acceptance.

It's been slow lately. I did what my editors asked. I queried some stories. And now I don't want to do those stories. So I'm thinking about querying again. Because I need to make money.

So let's go back to telling stories of Tijuana. This wasn't what I originally set to write ever. It just happens.

• • •

I knew it was a mistake moving in with her after the first night there.

Nothing happened at night. I don't really remember the night. It was probably uneventful. Me moving shit and setting up my room. My iMac where I currently type this was in a lonely corner of a small, decent room in some ghetto TJ apartment.

Rent was \$280 a month. I paid her first month + deposit. Split into two, \$140+ expenses to live in that boxy apartment with her was a great deal. Better than my parents.

Nothing happened that night.

I awoke to the sounds of her singing scales with her keyboard. She was doing it wrong.

I ignored it. That was her thing. Play keyboards and sing. I've seen her done it before.

That's how we met.

Oh yeah. I met her before and I already knew she was crazy. I moved in thinking, "how bad can it be."

It was bad since that first morning.

We met randomly at some hipster event in Pasaje Gómez, an arts alley. Local Tijuanaenses were selling homemade Etsy-like shit. I went there with my guitar because my brother asked me to help him with his stand. So I played guitar while people browsed his store.

She sat next to me and said nothing.

Then in her weird accent and soft voice, she said, "Hi, you... play pretty." She said it in Spanish, but it sounded like she didn't know the language well. And the inflection of her voice goes up and down in an odd fashion.

Nothing happened that day. I met a weird pale chick and thought nothing of it.

Weeks later I saw her pale face at a punk show in Mous Tache bar. That's what I kept doing those days. Drinking a lot of cheap shit and going to punk shows.

She was selling weed cookies and I bought some from her. They were pretty bad.

I went to the show by myself and she sold cookies to people in the crowd. I didn't pay attention to her much, but as the show ended and the beers hit me way more than the cookies, I was ready to go home. This is back when I was still living with my parents.

She said she had more weed at her house and invited me over to her place. We walked back to her place.

We fooled around on her couch. Then nothing happened and I fell asleep.

Her weed was shitty. Didn't even smoke it. I was too tired.

Months later, she told me she needed a roommate. Months later, I was ready to get out of my parents' house.

So fuck it. I knew she was crazy, but I moved in any way.

• • •

She came out of her room that first morning after singing scales wearing a long white gown. Those type of pajama gowns that you only see grandmas wearing.

I told her I wanted to put some plates and shit that was kitchen-related in the drawers of the kitchen.

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She replied, "But we already have plates. Why would you want to put more plates there?"

I told her because they were my plates and she had her plates.

The "we" thing was enough of a sign. She complained and said they would gather dust. So, great.

Two boxes of kitchen shit that was my property were not welcome in the kitchen we were supposed to be sharing.

Fuck it. I'll survive a few months with a crazy chick and leave.

I left the apartment to go to work. Office at 10:00 a.m.

. . .

Before moving in, I made her clear of two things. We weren't going to hook up at all and that I need the internet to work.

She texted me at lunch time, "please buy toilet paper because we need some."

I ignored it.

"We also need soap, sponges, and shampoo."

I ignored it again.

"Buy this type of shampoo."

I texted her back that I wasn't buying her all that shit but I agreed with buying the toilet paper.

I came home and she had done nothing all day.

I asked about the internet. She said she was going to get it. I asked what she did all day and she basically just sat in the apartment, cleaned it, and watched movies on her laptop.

I told her I had more shit that I wanted to move into the apartment. My TV and some furniture.

She said she didn't want a TV in the apartment because she would watch it too often. And she didn't want any more furniture because they get dirty.

The only internet I could get was in the corner of my room. I stole the signal from a neighbor and it was low and crappy. But that corner was the only place.

So that's where I stayed for the rest of my night until rinse and repeat.

Following morning I come out of my room, shower, and got ready to work.

She was in the kitchen spreading some avocado on a piece of toast.

I told her that avocados are one of the only things I don't like.

She turns around and says: "oh really?"

She then grabbed the avocado and started smushing it all over her face. Eww, why?

Because it was an avocado skin beauty mask according to her. It wasn't. It was avocado spread unevenly on her face to spite me.

She then grabbed the other half of the avocado and said: "you don't like it? What if I do this?" She lifted her gown and gestured touching herself with the avocado.

I didn't fall for her game. Have a good day. Going to work.

I came home at night to find out that she did nothing about the internet.

She said she didn't want internet in the apartment anymore. I needed it for work.

She said she worked online.

What did she do? She went to coffee shops and sold books on eBay for pennies. Books that her parents bought her for college.

How she paid rent or anything was always a mystery. I thought she sold weed or did something. But no. I suspect her parents gave her a small stipend and she would spread that stipend as best as she could throughout the whole month. Doing absolutely nothing. Wasting money.

She would also drag her piano and play in public. She barely even knew chords or music. I told her I could teach her but she adamantly said no.

She would grind on the piano seat, play random keys, and sing and moan. She told me once that, as an artist, her objective was to have an orgasm on stage in front of people.

She had cardboard cutouts in her room. Not official ones. It was just literal cardboard from a box, that she DIY and then crudely drew on them. They were supposedly Freddie Mercury, David Bowie, Prince, and John Lennon. She said they were her backup band.

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She lacked talent and self-awareness. She was also shy and odd.

And again, her pale face and weird accent didn't help.

Her name wasn't Palída Hortaliza. I learned that quick. Her name, according to her, and the landlord was "Alegría." Happiness.

That's what she had me call her.

Way later after moving out, I found out her real name.

I've only seen her once again and I'm not sure if it was her. It was like seeing the devil.

I had planned to move out after my two months since I had already paid for them. I told her that I was moving out because she refused to get internet and I needed a place with internet.

One day, I came back from work to find out that the couch she had in the living room was gone.

She sold it on eBay for \$1 USD to a buyer from Arizona. She carried and dragged the old worn-out couch to the border. Crossed it over. Walked over to the nearest post office. Paid \$30+ to have the couch shipped.

Why?

Because she didn't want the buyer to give her a bad review on eBay.

A few days later. She got a one-star review from that customer.

So she wasn't only crazy in the schemes of being crazy. She also just plainly didn't make sense. And the type of texts of her demanding shit continued. She kept telling me to buy certain things. Or that the apartment needed something. That "we" needed something.

All of that happened in less than a week.

I established my boundaries once more. But that didn't work.

• • •

Oh shit yeah. I forgot.

The second night I was there, she started crying out of nowhere. I asked her what was wrong, why was she crying?

She replied: "I cry every night because no one loves me."

And she did.

I heard her sobbing every night. It wasn't the quiet type of sobbing. She wanted the neighborhood to know she was crying. And then she would wake up at the crack of dawn to practice singing. Scales played wrongly and her voice not even close to matching the notes being played.

• • •

So. To recap.

She demanded shit via text. She sold shit on eBay but lost money while selling and lost most of her day. She didn't want a TV because she would spend too much time watching it, but she would watch movies she downloaded on her laptop all day. She wanted to be a singer but was nowhere close to reality in being one. And on top of all that, she demanded to clean everything extensively. Because that's what she did all day.

I decided to only be in my room and go out to use the bathroom. I never used the kitchen. I always ate out because she would complain.

I felt like a prisoner in my own apartment.

That's how it was for another week.

Things got worse.

She would demand more things from me, and when I refused she went crazy.

She told me the story of why she got kicked out of her parents' house once. In her own soft, awkward inflection, the story goes like this:

"So, I was at my parents' house. And I got bored. And I grabbed drawings that my brother had made. He was in art school. Well, I grabbed them and smeared *la regla* on all of them. Then I showed them what I did during dinner."

She then gave me a sly smile.

I didn't know what she meant by "la regla" which in Spanish means "the ruler." I was confused.

She kept saying la regla, la regla, as if it had more significance the more she yelled at me. Then she said it.

"I menstruated on my brother's drawings."

La regla is another way to say she had her period. And she was proud.

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She told that story as if she was an artistic genius. As if she did something amazing.

She told me another story.

“Another time, I grabbed my parents and sat them down in the living room. I unbuckled my belt and stripped naked. I kept the belt in my hand and started hitting the floor and hitting myself until I was bleeding. I kept hitting myself and the floor while screaming: ESTO ES LO QUE ME HICIERON!”

“This is what you did to me.”

I have no idea what her parents did to her. Shit was scary. I just wanted the two months to fly so I could find another place.

• • •

It was two weeks into living with her that I came into the apartment and found a handwritten letter from her.

The letter was accusing me of being a bad roommate and telling me that she was going to charge me for cleaning the kitchen and bathroom because I didn't clean. It basically said that. But it was written on both sides of the page.

I saw her that night and told her she had to be joking. There was no way I was going to pay for her cleaning. She wanted a ludicrous amount as well. Like three times what a maid would charge me to clean the apartment.

I refused.

She started hitting herself.

Slowly on her chest at first.

Like pounding on her chest with her closed right fist while staring at me.

She started pounding harder and harder. Clearly hurting herself.

She then said it.

“I'm going to call the cops and tell them you raped me.”

And she started beating herself up more.

I closed the door to my room in a panic. I posted on Facebook what I was going through in case things got out of control people knew what was going on. I opened the door after a few minutes to find that she was still hitting herself.

I left the apartment and went next door to the gas station.

The guy in charge of the building worked in the gas station, he told me to call him “Tache”. Luckily, he was there that night. I, panicking, told him what was happening.

Tache, with his broad white mustache and greasy hands, said: “se le boto la canica, verda'?” Which means she went crazy, right?

I told him I noticed the apartment below was empty and asked him if I could move in there that same night. He calmed me down and told me not to worry. He gave me the keys to the empty apartment and went over to the apartment to talk to Alegría.

She had calmed down but she had some blood on her forehead and bruises on her arms and chest.

I told her, through Tache, that I was there to grab my things and that I was moving out.

I grabbed my bed, my computer, some other basic things, and went to the apartment downstairs.

The following morning, with the help of Tache, I went back to the apartment for the rest of my shit. She sat in the living room observing me move out all my shit.

As I was moving the shit out and taking it to the other place, she grabbed a chair from her room, went to the apartment complex's tiny ass patio, sat down with a massive book (seemed like a textbook for coding which I'm sure she wasn't reading) and kept observing me.

She never said a word to me.

I never said a word to her.

A few days later she was gone.

Tache told me that she abandoned some shit in the apartment. Her backup band of crude cardboard cutouts. Some random clothes and broken heels. Books and notebooks with scribbles of her poetry. Other crap.

She was also didn't pay rent and left with the keys. The rent money I gave her.

The only thing that she took with her was her keyboard.

And now I had my own two-bedroom apartment in Tijuana. Two weeks free rent because Tache hooked it up and understood the situation.

You the man, Tache!

CHAPTER 10: NEW APARTMENT, NEW NOT- CRAZY ROOMMATE, CO- WORKER EXPERIENCES ZONA NORTE

I haven't been working lately. It has been slow these past few days. I don't like it because I'm not making any money.

I started taking pictures of pretty girls posing. I'm back in the photography game. I'm good at it. But I'm not sure if I love it. I just want to do it to make money. And I figured taking pictures of pretty girls is where there is money.

That, and pictures of food. And photojournalism.

I can do all types of pictures. I'm making some money out of photojournalism. I have a gig to take care of this week. But I need more money. And I just started taking pictures of girls modeling. I'm not sure where I'm going with it. I'm never sure where I'm going in life.

I don't think anyone ever does.

I haven't been writing. But I finally pitched something to my editor and I will be working on it next week. Leaving Tijuana for a while. I need to get away.

Just like I got away from living with Mrs. Palída Hortaliza.
Holy shit that was terrifying.

• • •

So now I was living in the same ghetto building in downtown Tijuana. I never described it well.

It's a red building. It's almost prison-like but not that horrible. The narrow corridor is dark and the stairs are of simple cement with black handrails. There were 12 units in there. The apartment that I moved out of was on the third and last story. It had nice light and a small balcony with nice views. Neighbors on each side that were okay and some in the bottom that I never really saw.

The apartment I moved in was in the middle level of the building. Surrounded by every apartment and right in front of the main stairs.

I heard every single movement in the complex.

The grumpy mechanic neighbors. The weird neighbor that owned a BMW and claimed to be a videographer but still shot film. Families that kept to themselves but looked scared. The guy that most definitely sold drugs. You know. Downtown Tijuana.

I moved to the boxy small two-bedroom apartment in the middle of the complex. The balcony for that apartment hit a wall of the building next door. The saddest balcony in history. That was the view from my room as well.

The light was shit. And I had a dusty extra room for rent.

Almost no furniture at all. Just my computer and my kitchen shit. Still, no internet and my new room didn't reach the WiFi from the corner of the previous apartment.

It was shitty. But I was happy.

Working every day at the office for \$800 a month and paying \$280 for a two-bedroom wasn't that bad.

It didn't take me long to find a roommate to split rent with. He barely lived in Tijuana so I barely saw him.

We are still good friends to this day. So for the purposes of this text let's call him Ricardo. Yeah. Why not.

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Ricardo showed me the joys of Zona Norte outside Hong Kong.

Up to this point, I have only been talking great about the sexual palaces in Zona Norte. Well, now it's time to talk about the shitholes.

Introducing La Nueva Pachanga. Just a few steps away from Hong Kong is this lovely place.

Ricardo took me walking through Zona Norte, but the opposite way I'm used to entering. This time, we walked from west to east on Calle Primera. Before this, I haven't even walked on Calle Primera besides by the Hong Kong area.

The area is gnarly. I rarely walk through that area now. Despite living a block from it. And a few blocks from Calle Primera, near La Internacional... Yeah. Don't walk there. It's too gruesome.

Shit. I live right there and I don't dare cross certain streets. Too many drugs in this town.

And that's where Ricardo was taking me.

Behind heavy blue curtains with a heavy stench of smoke, you'll find a more pleasant stench of piss and ammonia. Rats crawled by the floor and by the cracks on the ceiling. Beers are cheaper than in the store. And Ricardo walked in as if nothing. As if it wasn't a weird place. As if it wasn't the shittiest bar in existence.

The joys of La Nueva Pachanga.

This is where sad hookers end the night. The old ones that couldn't make any money sit at the bar and let old men buy them drinks. That's all they need.

It's a wormhole into another dimension. A few yards away people are living lavishly surrounded by beautiful naked women throwing money in the air like they just don't care.

And in La Nueva Pachanga people count pennies to get a drink.

Shoe shiners come in and offer to clean your shoes if you buy them a beer or a taco.

Junkies come in for a fix that is easily available in one of the shady corners of the bar.

Drunk old hookers with scars or barely passable men dressed in drag dance on the dirty pole hoping someone will give them a dollar. Usually, no one does.

There's a gambling machine similar to Pachinko but with a soccer theme. Those are supposedly illegal. But who cares. The short employee dances while he mops the floor over and over. Tipping him a coin would result in him promptly going to the soccer pachinko machine to try his luck.

Somehow, the jukebox is outstanding, it has an eclectic collection which includes numerous great bands. And the speakers sound good for how loud they usually have them and how shit the bar is.

Posters on the wall seem to be there since decades ago. Chivas, the soccer team, stomping on their rivals, America. Pictures of the team from seasons ago when they were actually good. Misspelled handwritten signs inform you of the prices.

"2 Pasifico Caguama 50 pesos"

Ricardo bought me a 10 pesos shot of tequila.

"Tequila el muerto, 10 pesos"

You read that right. That's around 60 cents for a shot. Obviously, it was fucking disgusting. But there we went again. Took a couple more 10 pesos shots and got some beers.

Beers, again, are cheaper than the store. They don't taste right but for around \$3 for two giant 1.27-liter beers it's a steal. Jukebox is cheap. The soccer pachinko machine is fun. The people that enter are insanely colorful.

It's the end of life.

I became addicted to it.

To that disgusting yet interesting wormhole and walking around the gruesome Calle Primera.

I rarely walk through there anymore.

I became addicted to the stupid soccer pachinko machine. 5 pesos for seconds of entertainment and every once in awhile win some money. I've lost around \$30 playing that stupid shit but got much entertainment out of it. Worth it. I would still go back just for that fucker.

And the pool table is not that bad. It's crooked and used as fuck. But 25-cent games. Beat that.

It's been a long time since I went to La Nueva Pachanga.

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It's been a long time since I went to Hong Kong.

I had a co-worker who was moving from Los Angeles to Tijuana to join the gang of writers in the office.

El Pinche Tony. A Mexican-American kid that wanted to pursue a career in writing sports. The kid now is an editor for some other shit. But I remember to perfection when I introduced to el Pinche Tony the double whammy.

Fucker was only 20-years-old when he moved to Tijuana. He had never been in a bar in his whole fucking life.

Can you imagine that?!

Of course, he had drunk before. This kid went to high school in California and partied.

But not bars. And not like this.

Take 1.

Hong Kong. Or I think for starters it was Adelita's.

It was Adelita's. He had never been to a bar, much less one with naked women everywhere.

I lied. I don't remember the night as perfectly as I wish. Memory is a bitch. And I've been Zona Norteando way too much that memories mix.

It had to be Adelita's. It's usually better to start there than to go to Hong Kong.

I remember he bought a girl a drink and was disappointed by it. That got him ready for Hong Kong. Yadda yadda yadda. Strippers and fun.

Dollars poorly or very well spent. It depends on how you look at it. It depends on how much money you make.

I wasn't making much. Neither was he. So we didn't stay there long.

I just showed him the joys of Zona Norte at around 2 p.m.

Of course, no trip was complete without Nueva Pachanga now.

. . .

That's the TJ experience. Well, the real Zona Norte experience.

Shithole to fancy sex palace in seconds. You have to see both.

Otherwise, you are doing it wrong.

And behind heavy curtains in Zona Norte, you don't know what you are going to find.

It's like a game show where you get to choose a door and see what happens. Some might be shitholes with sad old dancers, drunks, and drugs. Others might be completely empty with maybe one hot girl.

Playboy Club for some reason always has a group of Asians.

Zona Norte.

Just enter it. At any fucking given time. It's almost 11:00 a.m. right now and I could venture behind heavy curtains indoors of Zona Norte and who the fuck knows what I'm going to find.

Hong Kong is a guarantee that it will be the same for now. Same with Adelita's.

But the rest.

Who the fuck knows. Some shit for sure. I was curious to find out. And I did a lot. But for now. Let's go back to the double whammy.

Leaving Hong Kong is difficult. Or it used to be. There are too many naked women that it's hypnotizing and it pulls you back.

So it's best to snap the fuck out of it. And how better to snap the fuck out of than entering a different reality.

That's what I ohh shit... Come back to it later, I just got called for some work.

CHAPTER 10.5: RUDY THE ITALIAN NEW YORKER WHO SAID TIJUANA WAS THE DR MIXED WITH '80S BROOKLYN

I got busy again and I forgot where I was going with all the shit I was typing. I said it had been slow days in the other intro. Well, that got reversed. The editor accepted my pitch for a feature story, then I went to investigate another short story. I got really good material, so I pitched a lengthy story and he went for it.

Now I have a couple of days to finish the first story before I leave town.

And also one paid photo gig to take care of.

And a tour.

Not really a tour. My tours have changed a lot. There's still the occasional bachelor party, but it is very rare now.

This tour is of journalistic nature, not so much of gross nature. Irish reporters are visiting this weird city and they need someone to show them around. They found me somehow. And I got to take care of that this weekend.

And there are a lot of good events this weekend. And tomorrow I'm jamming with some guys to see if we start a band.

And...

And...

Tijuana is a lot. And I'm getting busy. Let's get it over with so I can go back to work.

• • •

We left Hong Kong and it was nice and bright out. What an experience. Especially for a 20-year-old who has never been in a bar or much less a titty club like that one.

I stopped feeling joy showing people that insane place. It used to be awesome to watch. How people's eyes lit up when they see the depravity. Men and women. LGBT or anything. It's world-famous for a reason. And getting famouser as I write this (I am aware famouser is not a word.)

So you can imagine Tony's conflicted feelings and emotions and excitements.

Taking him to La Nueva Pachanga is like throwing a bucket of cold water on his face.

It goes from tempting depravity from hell to actual hell. A real one. No makeup on this fucker. Crude reality.

We sat on the back near the inflatable palm tree. The only decoration inside La Nueva Pachanga besides the Chivas posters.

There used to be a pole there. Not sure if they changed it. But there used to be one.

Tony didn't understand why I took him to this shithole. I didn't really even know either.

That place still fascinates me, but I used to be obsessed with it.

There was a drunk older woman with a summery dress dancing by the pole. She had a date on a table. A date that was passed out and she barely paid attention to him.

Tony kept staring. I told him not to, but he couldn't help it. I tried not to, but I obviously played it dumb like I wasn't watching it.

Then she came over and touched Tony and asked for a dollar.

His reaction was, "eww no, get off of me."

Drunk woman got mad and said: "if you don't like it then don't watch!"

And kept dancing and making obscene gestures at us. She lifted her dress to show a very undesirable body.

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We left before sunset. That was Tony brief introduction to Zona Norte.

• • •

Reviewing memories of the time, my friend Nick from Minnesota was here when all this shit happened, since Tony and Nick met at some point.

This is when the craft beer scene barely started occurring and my tours started to shift focus.

I never took Nick to Zona Norte. Just craft beers and dive bars. More like my tours now.

Later that same week, I had my first legit paid customer. He was not interested in craft beer.

When I started, I used to advertise on Craigslist.

The ad said something along the lines of, "Hey, I'll guide you through Tijuana for \$25."

It probably included beer, tacos, and strip clubs as part of the ad. My first client came through those ads.

A guy from New York named Rudy. Classic Italian New Yorker from the Bronx. Super heavy accent straight up from the movies. Never met a guy like that. Incredibly New Yorker.

He compared Tijuana to the Dominican Republic and to '80s New York.

"Me and my boys, you know, we would go to the DR and get all these girls for cheap, you know, the DR was great, you know."

He sounded something like that. Really funny dude.

"New York was like this in the '80s, you know. You would drive around, you know, and get girls to suck your dick for a \$20, you know."

For him, Tijuana was that. A mix of '80s New York and his experiences in brothels in the Dominican Republic or "the DR" (*Dee Ahr* you idiot, not doctor.)

He requested chicken tacos.

That took me by surprise. Chicken tacos are an odd request. Or rarely even seen. I told him Tijuana is about fish and shrimp tacos or meat. Nah. He wanted chicken tacos.

This is how bad I was giving tours. I didn't know where to take him. We ended up

in a shitty place that served shitty tacos. He didn't like them.

Again, I told him chicken tacos aren't really a thing. Should have just taken him where it is good and not giving him silly choices.

We had a beer somewhere before going into the strip clubs.

He loved the shit out of Adelita's. Again, he said everything was the same as the DR.

He said that some politician came to the DR and cleaned it all up.

"They fucked up, you know. DR was great and then they cleaned it. No more hookers. We used to fly every other month, rent a house, you know, and get girls, you know. Beautiful girls for cheap. The DR was great. But no more, you know."

"You know" was never a question. More like an interlude between thoughts.

I charged him \$25 for the tour which he paid upfront. Then he paid for all the rest.

After Adelita's, of course, Hong Kong.

Oh was he loving the fuck out of Hong Kong.

He picked up the most plastic looking girl. He said he liked that. The faker the better. He bought her a couple of drinks and told me to get a girl for myself.

He then said he was going to take her to the room and gave me some cash so I can drink while I waited for him.

He came back all happy with the same girl and kept buying her drinks.

Old school photographers roam strip clubs to try to sell you a picture of the memory of you with a hooker.

He paid for a photograph with him and his girl. Two actually. One of them posing as if they were the most awkward high school couple before prom. The other of him with his head between her tits.

\$5 per picture.

We drank a bit more in Hong Kong. He said goodbye to his girl. And then left.

It was still day time. Nearing sunset.

He wanted to see more. So I took him through Zona Norte. We didn't go to La Nueva Pachanga, but I was more confident about where to walk in the area. He wanted to see the street girls.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

It was DR this. '80s New York that.

He fucking adored Tijuana.

We walked by where the transsexual hookers stand.

"I've seen a lot of transformers in my days, you know, and let me tell you, those transformers are some of the best transformers I've ever seen."

I never heard anyone call them "transformers." I know it's derogatory to call them trannies, shemales, ladyboys, or many more... but transformers. I think transformers is just fucking hilarious.

I'm pretty sure they find offense in that. They should find it empowering. Transforming oneself is difficult shit.

Sorry trans community. That was Rudy talking.

As we walked back to the border, he asked why so many *farmacias*. I explained the giant medical and dental tourism we have at the border.

Suddenly, Tijuana was not an interesting thing for him just for the girls.

Rudy needed dental care that he had been neglecting because it was too expensive.

He said he planned to come back in a couple of months, get dental work, and go find the exact same girl in Hong Kong.

• • •

Sorry, mom. Sex sells.

• • •

Rudy crossed back to San Diego. I charged him \$25 for the tour, but he was so happy with everything that he learned that he gave me \$50 tip.

I made as much money as the prostitute he slept with. I was conflicted, but I made money. Sleazy money.

I called my mom to tell her my first tour was a success and that I made more money than I expected. And told her that I was sorry because sex sells.

Rudy did come back. It was almost a year later. And his adventure was similar to the one above, except dental work, and he lost his keys in a taxi cab.

Not sure if that story is worth telling.

CHAPTER 11: MUSIC AND NEW FRIENDS

It is crazy how much can change in a short period of time. Last week was incredibly slow and today I find myself scrambling to see what I should take care of next. So many stories I pitched that I need to write. So many emails for other gigs. A completely different feel than last week.

And it's not only that change. This city changes constantly. And that changed my tours. And it also changed me.

I rarely do bachelor parties. Or like how my last tour called them "stag parties." Much less just take a single individual to the strip clubs.

My last tour wasn't even a real tour. It was more like real work. Irish reporters found me through the internet and they hired me for two days to help them with their work on the border. We covered a lot of Tijuana ground. I helped them with some interviews. And I helped them navigate this city.

We got pretty amazing shots.

They got some really great interviews. It's not the report I would like about Tijuana since they are focusing on migrant issues and the border. Not a travel piece about Tijuana. But once it was all done, we got to hang out more and had a couple of beers.

I never thought my tours would turn into that. I never thought I would be back into photography. I never thought I was going to be writing this much or that I would actually make money doing this.

I still can make more money. I have to work so much more. But the goal of the beginning of this year was to finish this book.

So now I have three photo gigs to take care-off, the tour is over, two long stories, and perhaps a couple of short stories.

I'm hungry.

And I need to get to work.

• • •

I had my own apartment. A roommate that was barely home. And when he was, we partied a lot.

Routine settled in.

Every morning wake-up, shower, go to the office, pick breakfast on the way.

Come back late in the afternoon, drink a beer, do more work, go to bed.

Rinse and repeat for a few months.

I almost fell in love with a girl who was friends with my roommate. She told me she thought I was gay because I lived with him.

I had no idea my roommate was gay.

Is gay. He never told me.

I never asked him. We never talked about it. I love that guy. We hang out often. I just don't think he wants to talk about it.

That girl was in love with her ex. It ended as quickly as it began.

And then I met him.

Him.

My sensei-master at writing.

The one that might be editing this text.

• • •

It's getting near the end of the tales since I'm catching up with current times, from what happened to what is happening.

• • •

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

I met the Chad master at a show in Mous Tache. That's what I did for the weekends. I went to shows in the city.

Chad looked like a young Santa Claus. German looking blond with blue eyes, a protruding belly, with a caguama in one hand, cigarette dangling in his mouth, and his goofy fucking smile.

He doesn't remember the first night I met him. He remembers a different night a few weeks later.

That first night, he told me he was a writer. He told me how much money he made per article. He failed to tell me this was for cover stories or for his own columns, not every writer made that much.

Also, he had been writing for the magazine for years.

That's when I started losing interest in writing about soccer. I was tired of the job and routine.

As far as Tijuana Adventures go, there wasn't much tourism and I wasn't getting many customers.

I was going to shows and meeting bands and musicians. I would tour them around and help them with anything I could.

That's when I thought about doing tours for traveling bands.

Stupid me didn't realize that bands never have any fucking money. So those obviously never went anywhere except partying with musicians.

That's the night Chad remembers. When Mothers of Gut came to town with HABITS.

I don't think either of those bands exist anymore. But they were great.

HABITS was a crazy synthesizer band mostly done by Dustin. The singer would

climb speakers while singing distorted shit whilst the drummer made noise next to a keyboard and more synth shit.

Something like that.

The genius behind Mothers of Gut was Aaron. His band was just fucking crazy. The drummer had the body of Super Saiyan Zach Hill mix with the veiny, full-of-heroin arms of Iggy Pop. He fucking beat on them drums like a motherfucker. The guitarist had long hair and looked similar to the singer of HABITS. The bass player was missing his front teeth.

Two songs into the show of Mothers of Gut, the bass player fucking tripped off stage and broke the head of the bass.

Show over. There weren't many people at the show anyway.

The large group ventured into Zona Norte. I don't remember much of that night except finding out that the drummer did not have an ID of any form or shoes. He had crossed the border and forgot to grab his passport or any ID. Not forgot... He didn't have any.

There's also a picture of the toothless bass player with a prostitute in Hong Kong. I believe they all crashed in Chad's apartment that night.

A small friendship developed that night. That friendship would change my life.

Later on, I would show a stranger that I met in a coffee shop the CD that Mothers of Gut gave me. He fucking loved it. And another small friendship developed with Danger Dave.

Chad, Danger Dave, and Pachangas Matt. The year of the Rumble Fest.

That's coming up next.

But not before explaining a bunch of other mess that was going on.

CHAPTER 12: SHIT ATTEMPT AT WRITER, FRENCHMEN WORLD TRAVELERS, EATING IN HONG KONG

I have a weird phantom pain in my right leg. I hope it's not because of my horrible diet of tacos and hamburgers. That's not a proper diet.

I have so much work this week. I didn't do any last week and just let all the shit mount. Haven't written much. The one story I sent hasn't been published and I have low hopes. It doesn't matter. It wasn't very good. Pictures were great, the text wasn't.

That's what I'm into now. Taking pictures. And I have a bunch of those gigs this week. It should be fun.

Instead of working, I ended up partying for four nights in a row. It's incredible how easy this city does that to you. I didn't even plan to do any partying at all. Wednesday, the young freckled brunette that was mentioned earlier who thought I was the love of her life texted me. She is back in Tijuana. She wasn't even living here.

She is now a blond. She's also now 24.

Things happened. They shouldn't have.

On Thursday, another girl contacted me for pictures. Things escalated quickly when they shouldn't have.

Tititijuana.

Friday, buddies from San Diego came over and we went bar hopping and ended in a meh ska show.

Saturday, friends from Mexico City came over with tickets for the Xolos games. They were great palco tickets and included free drinks and food. Pizza and wings were bad, but they were free. There was only light beer available, but also bottles of Black Label.

From there, the partying continued until almost 3 a.m.

Titititijuana.

. . .

Two important things happened which turned me into a writer. Somewhat. Up to this day, I still have no idea what I'm doing.

Meeting Chad. He inspired me to become a writer and to try to get published for the magazine I currently work for.

Meeting Vincent, the Frenchman world traveler.

Besides announcing on Craigslist, I also had a Couchsurfer account. A lot of people stayed with me through there. I don't use it anymore, but back then I used it to practice giving tours.

Vincent messaged me for a couch and to help him with a project called You Make My Trip. He was basically traveling the world asking the internet what he should do in the city he was staying in.

For Tijuana, the voting was between partying his ass off or investigating what the life of the migrants and deportees that lived on the river by the border was like.

The internet chose the deportees. I wanted the party for my own sake and to grow the tours.

This was the turning point in my life. Vincent stayed with me for almost a week. After a drunken tequila night, Vincent met and fell in love with my friend Shappu.

Their romance ended up in disaster years later, but that's beside the point.

The point is that with Vincent and Shappu, we explored the Bordo area and more of Zona Norte. Really gruesome stuff. People doing heroin or meth in broad daylight. Injecting random needles straight to their necks. The disgusting Tijuana.

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The Tijuana that I got addicted for a while. Nueva Pachanga.

The lowest of the lowest of the fucking world.

It's like staring at the face of death and walking away.

So much misery. So many drugs.

I knew I had to write about what we experienced. This was my first failed attempt at writing for a magazine.

My article got rejected.

Not only was it plagued with grammatical and spelling mistakes, but it was also just purely bad. "I this. I that. This happened."

Bad.

Horribly written bullshit.

The editor rejected it and told me to rewrite it. It took me a long time to write it. I wasn't happy. I thought it was good.

It wasn't.

I rewrote the article. But I just fixed grammatical and spelling mistakes and cut down a lot of the fat.

It was still a horrible article.

No details.

Nothing interesting.

It got rejected again.

My gamble didn't pay off. I quit my job to spend more time doing Tijuana tours and attempting to be a freelance writer.

I was rejected and was left with little to no money. But not much money is needed to live in this city.

The editor ignored my emails and my attempts to rewrite the story. I had destroyed his patience and the door was closed.

I did a couple of more free tours through Couchsurfing. Another Frenchman and world traveler named Alec. Also, guys from Montreal that I randomly met playing chess at what used to be the only craft brewery in Tijuana.

Tijuana has changed so much and will continue to do so.

And Tijuana changed me.

I like to say that I'm not a writer, Tijuana is just easy to write about. Tijuana transformed me for the better (maybe.) Tijuana transforms people, not always for the better.

• • •

Random little tours kept me afloat for a bit. One was with a guy named Jesse and a dude named Max who carried a banana suit wherever they went.

I've done way too many tours and have fucked with Tijuana too much to remember how things went down. We did the basic Tijuana tour to Playas and dive bars in downtown. Again, back then the craft beer or food scene was nothing to what it is now. Options were scarce.

All I remember that his time we didn't do Hong Kong, we ended up in La Malquerida.

As mentioned, La Malquerida is a much cheaper strip club that's mostly for locals. Beers are cheap and it has more of a wild cantina feel than that of a strip club.

The guys got plastic-looking women sitting on their laps. The one I liked was cold and not into it, so it didn't pan out well for me.

For them, I had to negotiate.

Mini-pimp translator.

That's basically how I made some of my money.

After buying the girls plenty of drinks, the guys were tired of having them on their laps and wanted more.

I negotiated blowjobs for \$20 plus the private room.

They left immediately to the private rooms and came back a few minutes later to share the stories. One got a raw blowjob with no condom, the other was forced to use a condom. Both were very happy with the outcome.

That's all I remember.

And that I got paid.

Paid to party and to be a mini-pimp.

• • •

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

After that tour, I had a tour with what I thought was a perverted old Canadian man. After giving the basic tour around the city, I learned sadly, that his wife had passed a couple years ago, but now he was free to do as he pleased.

He owned property in Jamaica and had his own business in Canada. His two sons were old and married. He decided to travel the world and ended up Tijuana.

The first time I ever had food in Hong Kong was with this fellow. He ordered the breaded shrimp on rice.

He stayed in the Hong Kong Hotel (Las Cascadas) and book the master suite, not the penthouse. It was a super nice room that looked like a porno set that I described before.

After the basic tour, we went back to Hong Kong. He picked a girl that he liked and kept buying her drinks.

Then he told me to choose a girl that I like.

I walked to a girl that I like but she gave me the cold shoulder, so I picked the one next to her.

As soon as we got back to the table, the girl jumped on me and said: "güerito, que bueno que me escogiste." She said she had been checking me out and was so happy I picked her out.

The young girl with the older Canadian wasn't happy, but I told her that the dude was willing to spend a lot of money.

The Canadian gave me \$100 and told me to keep the girls with me while he goes to his room to shower. He told me to specifically not let go of the girl that he picked.

It took him almost 30 minutes to come back. The hotel is a crazy maze, so he had trouble finding his room and finding his way back to Hong Kong.

We stayed with the two girls for a couple of hours buying drinks, food, and tequila shots.

Then it was negotiating time for the Canadian.

My girl was all over me without the necessity of paying her. She was just happy we were buying her drinks, as she makes money that way. And she was happy it was with me instead of some other pervert.

The tequila man with a whistle that comes around and forces tequila shots down your throat to ask for tips swung by our table. Instead of getting tequila directly poured into my mouth, it was poured down the navel of the chick I was with down to her pussy and into my mouth.

Yuck. But drunk and having fun. Don't judge.

Also, tequila should've killed bacteria, right?

Or so I told myself.

His girl, she was still not very happy.

The Canadian made his offer. \$300 for a couple hours with her. Way more than the usual average pay. The girl was hesitant but she took it.

I am not sure what happened after. I went home. The Canadian stayed with the girl in his hotel room.

He paid me more than the rest. My tours started to have value. But I was just taking guys to strip clubs and translating for them.

Cupid translator mini-pimp.

Not a good thing on my resume.

Not a good thing to be writing about. But that's how I stayed afloat for a while.

CHAPTER 13: SNEAKING THROUGH THE BACKDOOR AND TIME TRAVEL

Changes changes changes.

I like to talk about them. And recently, there have been many changes in my life. Nothing is like it used to be. It's interesting what success looks like depending on where you look.

Getting published in a magazine felt like a huge success. The first cover story also felt great. And now it's a job. I haven't even done it for that long and I'm already tired of it.

Not writing cover stories. Those are hard to come by. Writing, in general, gets tiresome. But also pictures.

This Saturday wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. I had to take pictures at a hip-hop show. The light was shit. But I managed. It was fun.

Changes.

"If you put more effort into your tours, you would be so successful." Or so they say.

If I put any more effort into anything I would be more successful.

Effort is hard to come by. I'm easily satisfied with little.

And yet I have so much more than many others.

I still don't have a car. And I should get one.

Sounds basic. But I've been fine without a car for years. I do need one though. I borrow my brother's car way too often.

That's what I'm doing tomorrow.

Borrowing my sister-in-law's car for a Tijuana Adventure.

Changes. Those changes.

From going to strip clubs and being a mini-pimp to whoring out the city's problems.

The world-famous Hong Kong.

The world-famous border wall.

Penis.

. . .

It was a bit over four years ago

Weird.

Time in Tijuana goes fast.

That's when I started getting published in the magazine. I now do a bunch of things for them. It always feels like I'm pretending to know what I am doing. I have no clue. But it works.

Cover pictures are usually mine. I've had a handful of covers already. I have another one in mind. I get published regularly.

And yet.

Yet.

I get nervous every single time. That someone is going to find out. That I have no idea what I'm doing or what I am talking about. That I'm just a lazy guy that figured out how to be the laziest and still live.

That's what I have tomorrow that is making me nervous. Tijuana Adventure tours always make me nervous. No matter what I'm doing.

I haven't been to a strip club in almost a year. I stopped caring about them. I bet I would be nervous if I had to go. I don't really want to go, but people pay me to take them.

I don't really want to go to the thing tomorrow either.

It makes me nervous.

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I just rather stay at home and play video games. But I need to make money.

Journalists from New Zealand are coming over to see the border prototypes by Trump. I'm getting hired by journalists instead of by party-goers or perverts.

Changes.

Two are from New Zealand. The other is a famous journalist working on a book about migration.

Famous as in she has a bestseller and a Wikipedia page. I guess famous is not the right word. More like respected in her field.

And that scares me.

I know it's going to be fine. And it will make a great story. I just get nervous.

The problems of being an introvert/extrovert.

It's also really early. I have to meet them at 7:30 a.m. at the border. Then a bunch of missions. And end the day early before 2 pm.

My tours usually start at dusk and end at dawn.

This one is the complete opposite. Changes...

This week is a bunch of busywork. I don't want to do any of it. Just like I haven't been writing. Because I don't want to do it.

Back then, I was excited about the prospect of writing. It was tough. But getting published was the best. Not only because money! I needed the money!

I had no idea how to make a living by writing. Every small publication, I would treasure.

Fuck yeah.

\$100 bucks or so for writing things that I experience. Observe. Write. Details. Quotes. Write.

I also got rejected a bunch. I didn't really have the fundamentals.

I got rejected by the main editor to the point where he was ignoring my emails. That was pointless. But I kept writing. I wrote a basic article about what Tijuana was becoming.

So many changes already.

I submitted it to the travel section through the website. Different editor. They

liked the story.

That was my first publication with the magazine. With the travel editor. The smallest of the sections in a small magazine.

And I was so happy with it. I successfully snuck in through the back door.

After that, I wrote about a music festival in Tijuana. After all, that's what I liked the most about the city and my obsession.

Music editor. Nice. Two editors on my side.

News stories were next. That pays better than travel or music and I landed a great story that involved a border wall riot. I also had the proper contacts for it and had inside information.

Bam!

That's how I started writing for the Magazine.

My first cover would come years later. And it was about beer. Meeting the marketing manager came later as well. And now, I know a lot of people in the office and I do a bunch of shit.

It all started with a travel story about Tijuana's nightlife. The story talks about all the changes in Tijuana.

It wasn't as easy as I made it sound. It took a lot of time. I'm still not in a great position either. I barely make money. But living the Tijuana life helps.

So instead of taking people to strip clubs, I tried to switch my tours to be about music. That was a stupid idea since people that like concerts barely have any money and if they are going to venture to Tijuana already, they don't need to pay a tour guide.

Changes.

. . .

I was barely making any money through writing. So life was of cheap beer and tequila. My sensei master of a writer, Mr. Chad, drank a lot.

I became a professional writer because of him.

And by that, I mean an alcoholic.

Chad wrote a lot after nights of partying and encountering a deadline or inspiration. He would write through the night while drinking, and drinking a lot.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

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I'm a sleepy drunk.

As soon as I hit my nice limit, I usually turn off.

I try to never appear drunk despite heavy drinking.

I rarely or ever drink in the mornings. Most of the time that I drank in the mornings was because of Chad.

I miss him. His room sat across my room. The apartment was basically empty.

Now my mom lives there. I'm not sure how I feel about it. It's only been a couple of days. And it's supposedly not to be long.

Changes.

After months of living alone with my cat.

Changes.

And before that, one year of living with the same girl who I thought I was going to marry.

Changes.

Los caminos de la vida, no son lo que yo pensaba.

That song has a fucking exquisite bass line.

Changes.

My friends from Minnesota are also visiting this week. From Minnesota to Tijuana.

It sounds strange as fuck. Minnesotans in a Tijuana Adventure. Let's see what happens.

Changes. My life in Tijuana has been nothing but constant changes. I swear I can't predict what next year will be like.

Maybe that's what life is in every big city. I don't know what my life could be like outside Tijuana... It's a strange one, that's for sure.

My life is much more tranquil now. I have somewhat of a busy schedule and workflow.

I still feel like I'm bullshitting my way through life and somehow it's working.

The writing is catching up to where I am now. But before all of that... There were a lot of drugs, alcohol, and women.

The misogynistic writing in the era of the #MeToo in a strange world from a bizarre city continues.

CHAPTER 14: PACHANGAS MATT, DRUGS, RUMBLE FEST, DONKEY SHOW, BANDS, AND PARTY

A blog post about my life 2 years ago showed me that I was very sick in February, I was broke, and my life sucked. That blog post also contained pictures of Mila Kunis that I took 10 years ago.

But two years ago, I was a party animal.

Pachangas Matt.

I'm sort of a professional alcoholic now. I don't really drink in moderation but it's really hard to get me drunk.

My roommate said he never saw me drunk. My ex-girlfriend saw me real drunk probably twice, but she also said she never saw me drunk.

Besides that... I drink, I get tired. I go to bed.

I don't know how other alcoholics can do it. I'm not capable of drinking and staying awake. At some point, I'm just done.

Pachangas Matt lasted a bit until dawn.

Drug infused Danger Dave lasted for days. Cocaine is a hell of a drug.

And in Tijuana, cocaine is usually not the purest.

Chad was fueled by caguamas back then. He could last until noon or later the

next day just drinking caguamas and talking to everyone. His Spanish improved after three or more caguamas.

Spanglish ruled supreme.

I often had to drag Chad back to the apartment or leave him behind because I was going to bed.

The sun rising felt like an indication that it was bedtime. Some bars never close in Tijuana. I haven't been in any past midnight in a while. It used to be an every night thing.

\$100 a week is all you need to live off caguamas and street tacos. Making US dollars and living in Mexico can be very cheap. Rent was \$340 a month split into two. Expenses were minimal. That's a couple days of work. Or just one. It depends.

There's a lot of time to be spent drinking caguamas. It was a full year of doing it. I still do it now.

The average caguama in a dive bar goes for \$2-4, they are \$2 in the store, so bars virtually sell caguamas for the same price.

I don't want to do the math, but that's a lot of caguamas a week for just \$100.

Tacos are just \$1.

You get it. Your money is worth a lot more.

That's why thousands of people do it. Cross the border, work for a couple of days a week, live in Tijuana like a king. Two workdays, five rest days. Caguamas and tacos.

• • •

After many caguamas as the three amigos, we came up with the idea of Fist Fest.

Nope. That was wrong.

Fist Fest turns out to be a festival of men fisting each other.

That wasn't it.

Yep. Just Googled it. Still is that shit.

"Fist Fest® is most likely the longest running men's fisting weekend in the world. Established in 1997, Fist Fest® came under our stewardship in 2011. We are thrilled to be able to continue and grow this event. We currently produce four annual weekends."

Rumble Fest.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

Let the Rumble Fest shit begin.

Rumble Fest was the attempt of an impossible idea. The perfect and cheapest music festival uniting Baja California and California under one abandoned factory. 28 bands. Live art. Cheap beer. Lots of drugs.

\$2 entrance. And people didn't even pay that.

We lost a lot of money that night. A lot of money for our standards. I lost close to \$1,000.

There was more money lost.

Hah. I just realized I'm wearing the Rumble Fest t-shirt.

I spent \$300+ on t-shirts that didn't sell.

By the end of the festival, I was begging people to buy one so I can recoup some money.

It was the most stupidest fucking thing I have ever attempted (I know, bad grammar).

That shit snowballed out of control quickly.

We had the idea in early March and started printing the first posters after we found the location of an abandoned factory owned by an MMA gym that Danger Dave frequented. The gym became partners. That's why the name of the festival had to have something aggressive. Like fist.

Except not that.

Tijuana Rumble Fest.

Shit tons of bands.

More than half drop from the first poster. Second poster. More bands from LA. More Hype. New graphic designer who I never paid. Sorry, Zuko.

100 ONCES.

That was one of the things I cared about the most. That band fucking ruled. Too bad they are not together anymore.

And my band.

Donkichow. Or Donkey Show.

Pretending to be a rockstar playing shitty math rock for bands from LA that are barely known.

100 Onces got big for a bit. Not big big. Just big in the math-rock circles.

Music. I miss it.

Before Rumble Fest.

Three months of preview shows. Getting drunk as fuck. Cocaine seemed to be everywhere.

Fucking cocaine.

Never liked that drug until the year of the Rumble Fest.

There was also a lot of acid...And a lot of ecstasy.

And there might have been some meth.

I haven't done any drugs for more than 2 years.

You only YOLO once.

CHAPTER 14.5: RUMBLE FEST, ACID, AND METH

The festival ended. It was a mess. We lost a lot of money. And I barely even slept.

I still owed \$400 to Mothers of Gut and Habits who came all the way from Los Angeles. They also had a horrible time, except when they were on stage and then partying. They had a horrible time on their way down to Tijuana. They got a flat tire, got in trouble at the border, and it was a general mess. They also got up on stage later than promised but made the most out of it.

Not only that. I promised them \$400+ expenses. I only paid them \$400, it was all I had. As in, seriously, all I fucking had. \$64 were left in the bank. And I had no real income.

We thought that we were going to make money with Rumble Fest.

Fuck were we wrong. And all the signs that it was going to be wrong were there. And I knew it. But we were having too much fun.

I crossed the border to the US with the bands and gave them the cash. I didn't sleep for over 20 hours and border crossing took us around 2 hours. I was destroyed. And cashless.

I went home, got food, got plenty of water, dropped acid, and floated away for what seemed like days.

After everything that happened, everyone was on acid during the festival except me. It was my turn. I could see my body floating away as I blasted live concerts on YouTube by Battles and other noisy/mathy bands. I rested on acid. Again, as if floating/

levitating in the middle of the room.

• • •

Months before Rumble Fest, we were organizing mini-festivals. It involved bands that were going to be featured in the event and other minor bands that asked us to be in it but we couldn't. We did one or two every weekend. This often involved music, alcohol, and drugs.

Sex. Sex was also included and random.

Most of us were single. And we ruled the stage, the entrance, and the party. The party never fucking ended.

The party started since the idea of Rumble Fest came about. We worked. But work was partying. And coming up with ideas. And talking to bands.

I did a lot of the work.

The website. The ideas. The actual fabrication of what was going to go down. Logistics. They never trusted me fully, and a lot of that went wrong. Logistics.

I had some contacts in the music industry and other vendors.

David had the crazy idea and the contacts for music and party people.

Chad had the contacts for music and artists.

And for three months we coordinated to make it all happen.

J-Mar came later. He had contacts and his own ideas. His band was opening the festival. We needed his support.

After many preview shows, the date of Rumble Fest was near. Which was a week before my birthday.

The ultimate party celebrating that this shit was actually happening. At the gym, with our partners.

Tecates abounded. And we drank for a long time.

Cocaine was also available. And though I don't like the drug, I partook.

Suddenly, we were running low on beer and out of cocaine and it was past midnight.

Someone said he had a contact for both. Forty minutes later when only one beer was left, the contact showed up with a 24-pack and more cocaine.

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Party saved... momentarily.

That was harsh cocaine.

In fact, it didn't feel like cocaine at all.

We were at the gym. There were mirrors everywhere. So I remember staring at myself in the mirror and realizing I just did some meth.

My hair was crazy, I felt insanely energized and powerful, my eyes were bloodshot red, and I had a sudden thirst for everything.

That feeling continued the next day.

And the next day.

And almost to the next day.

We drank Tecates throughout the whole weekend. Mostly at Tropics Bar.

That's why I loathe that place. And many other reasons.

That year, 2014, was the last time I went there, near Christmas time.

Except, I broke my promise of not going there last week. When friends from Minnesota came over and we were invited there. It wasn't as horrible as my memory painted it.

It was on Sunday at Tropics Bar when I started to feel the fucking worst withdrawal feelings ever. Thank god I don't really fucking smoke cigarettes and never dabbled with heroin.

Fuck that.

It was a fucking nightmare.

I was wearing sunglasses at night like a fucking douchenozzle. But I did it because my head felt horrible. I was a zombie. I was fully awake but tired as fuck. I knew the only thing that would make me feel better would be more meth.

Or "cricais" (crick-ice) cocaine mixed with "ice." That's what it was.

That shit was fucking nasty.

To top it all off, there were four women at the bar that I have previously slept with. One crazy chick, one girl that I fell in love with and the feelings weren't mutually, and two one-night stands.

And there I was with. Feeling like shit. Drunk as fuck and coming off from meth. And ex-lovers in the same bar talking to other lovers.

"Tijuana es un cojadero, se cree ciudad, pero es un pueblito."

Tijuana is a fuckfest, it believes its a city, but it's just a small town. I was warned about that when I first arrived in the city. It was. It still is.

. . .

One week to Rumble Fest. Nothing was really ready. Problems were mounting. Everything was falling apart. And the solution was more drugs and alcohol.

Clean the fuck out of the area where the fest was going to happen. Fell behind in permits. The vendors were confused. The sound was a shitty contractor. The bands were a mess. And organizers...

Organizers were kept together by drugs, friendship, Tecates, and a belief that we could pull the best fucking concert ever out of our asses.

For some people it was. For a lot of others, it was a disaster.

It had its highlights. For me, it was 100 Onces. That was it. That was the only moment I enjoyed myself for a second.

The rest was running around FUCKING everywhere answering fucking EVERYONE about FUCKING anything. And almost everyone was on fucking drugs. Which made things worse.

I had to kick out bands off-stage. Held the ankle of the drummer of the Wax Children to let them know it was their last song. They expanded that last song for many minutes and I had to grab his ankle again. Everything behind schedule.

And bands always want special treatment. They are all rockstars in their heads.

I had to kick out one of the bands. I told them that I couldn't be giving everyone blowjobs. And they came in demanding instead of helping. The schedule was way behind, and they wanted the stage. Told them it wasn't their turn, they got up on stage anyway.

Kicked them the fuck out.

Not your fucking turn.

Fucking bands.

Many were helpful, many were on drugs (yet still helpful), and most seemed to enjoy themselves.

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Only one band were complete ratdicks, they don't exist anymore, so it's not even worth mentioning them. Great musicians. Shit attitude.

The other, San Pedro El Cortez, they were the best. They didn't care what happened as long as they could have beers. They played at 4 a.m. The last band to play. And they were happy to do so. With a shit drum set and without checking sound over and over. They just went up on stage and did their thing.

And that's the last time I tried organizing a major event. And I don't think I ever will. Unless I get paid a lot and the investment is not my money. And that's never going to happen. So yeah.

No.

. . .

I rarely even go to shows nowadays.

This last week I went to two. That felt good. I should go to more. But no more

drugs. Those days are behind me.

That's what your twenties are for, right?

Hunter S. Thompson would disagree. But I don't have his talent or his wit.

One show was in San Diego. Kirby Dream Band. Nerdy shit. It was great.

The other was in Tijuana with my Minnesotan friends. Perdición. It was hardcore. It was fucking loud. Very fucking loud. Dangerously fucking loud.

Minnesotan friends couldn't handle the loud. So we bounced after a few songs.

That was after days and nights partying in San Diego, one night in Tijuana, Minnesotans were hungover as fuck, we still managed to party somehow.

No strip clubs.

They did that in Southeast Asia. And didn't feel the need to do it anymore.

My stories are enough.

I don't need new stories. And I only have a few stories left before I'm done embarrassing myself.

CHAPTER 15: MAD DOG MATEO AND CRAZY SOUTH AFRICANS

I have a tour the day after tomorrow. A British film crew is coming over to shoot a documentary that follows a commercial pilot. Five guys total, the pilot, the director, two cameras, and the sound guy. It should be interesting.

I have some work tomorrow. Shooting a new rugby team in San Diego. It's supposed to rain. It should be interesting.

Interesting. That's what my life aspires to be. I should travel more instead of just receiving travelers here. Spend 6 months in a different city for the rest of my life. Writing 1,000 words or more a day in my experience in that place.

Professional traveler. The dream job.

I'm stuck in Tijuana for now.

I can't afford to travel now. Can't afford much. Saving up to get a car. I haven't owned a car since I moved to Tijuana. Now I need one.

Interesting.

• • •

A lot of interesting tours have happened.

One of the stories that I tell a lot is one that I barely recall. Bachelor parties sort of mixed into one gigantic story.

Then there are other special events that are not bachelor parties.

That one boring tour I had with a beautiful Australian couple. They were vegan and they arrived in Tijuana before noon. That tour was forgettable. The couple was gorgeous (both models), but no personality. That tour was one of the tamest most boring tours.

I had different Aussies as well. Three friends that were friends of the wife of a great friend of mine. Yep. Friends of friends of friends.

The three of them were on the chubby side. One was ginger with long hair and beard, the other had salt and pepper hair and was a comedian who Playboy retweeted often, and the other was a chubby bald DJ.

All of them were hilarious.

I stayed with them for a couple of days. The first night in Hong Kong, the comedian and the DJ started fighting. Ginger ignored them and suddenly he had a beautiful girl on his lap. The girl told him he loved gingers. The guy didn't believe her but did buy her a couple of drinks that night. Nothing happened.

The next night, a similar story. Went out for food, tacos, drinks, and more. And ended up again in Hong Kong. Comedian and DJ started arguing again, and suddenly the Ginger disappeared with the same girl he chatted the previous night.

We didn't even notice.

Apparently, the girl recognized him from afar and they disappeared together.

That feels like it was many years ago. The guys loved Kokopelli tacos. They wanted to open a franchise in Melbourne because they swore it would be a total hit.

They promised to come back.

They haven't.

I haven't seen my friend or his wife in a couple years. I've been planning to visit them. It's only LA. But I am stuck in Tijuana.

Nah.

The story I tell a lot it's the one with the South Africans.

• • •

South Africans have broken the record of alcohol and food consumed in two days.

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I forgot how they contacted me, but I remember when we met.

They booked Hotel Ticuan for the night. I met them in the lobby. Two best friends in their mid-40s. Both plenty rich, one fucker had a house and business in Malta. Both had their own businesses in South Africa. Both married with children.

And every year, they take two weeks and party out in Vegas. They just spend thousands of dollars partying. Just the two of them. Their two weeks of fuck everything, we are just going to do whatever we want.

That year, they found me and Tijuana.

They loved that I knew who Die Antwoord was. And that I obviously knew District 9. I love that movie.

I lived in LA when they installed them fake benches announcing District 9. They didn't look like movie posters. Just said that aliens aren't allowed to sit on the bus benches, humans only. They were awesome.

We got beers in the lobby's bar. Three each to be exact. We drank them in less than 20 minutes. Before 4 p.m.

We got the check. \$9 dollars in total.

They thought it was \$9 per beer.

Nope. I informed them that beers are a dollar each in Ticuan. The hotel is owned by the same owners that have multiple bars and hotels. Beers are less than a dollar at most of their establishments.

South Africans started laughing. They couldn't believe such a nice hotel would be selling beers for a dollar.

They dropped a \$20 and we left the hotel.

Tour was typical. Food. Craft beers. Drinks. And then strip clubs.

Before going to the best strip clubs, they requested a shitty one. Just as a warm-up.

And I knew exactly where.

El Zorro Bar.

"Well... cum... to Tijuana! Exxxotic girls!!!"

That's what the cheap sign on the front of that shit bar reads. It's next to one of

my all-time favorite bars here. Nelson Bar. You'll find me there constantly. Or maybe not by the time you read this.

We went to Nelson before going to El Zorro.

And here is something I found out about myself. Don Julio tequila makes me black out.

That's why I say I don't really remember what happened... Just little flashes... of debauchery.

We took two shots of Don Julio each. Again, guys were rich, so they were just throwing money with no regard. They were used to Vegas. Tijuana was nothing.

I woke up the next morning to find my wallet, my phone, and a crisp \$100 bill on my desk. The very same desk I'm typing this crap right now. I barely had a memory of what happened the previous night.

I seriously checked my asshole.

Why would I have an extra \$100?

Nope. Asshole was safe.

Checked my Uber history. Saw that I got an Uber before midnight from Hotel Ticuan to my house.

I didn't even last till midnight.

I called the guys asking them if they were alright and confessed that I had no idea what had happened the previous night.

I was so hungover and confused.

They told me not to worry, that I was a great host.

I told them I was going to cure my hangover at Telefonica Gastro Park, the trendy food truck location that opened in Tijuana in 2015 and has grown since. Featured in the New York Times and more.

That place. Before it was huge. But still pretty popular. Especially for a Saturday at around noon.

They met me there.

. . .

And yes. I'm listening to Die Antwoord while I'm writing this crap.

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Mad Dog Mateo!
That's the nickname they gave me.
Mad fucking Dog Mateo.
Pachangas Matt and Mad Dog Mateo.
Those days are behind me... I think.

• • •

Saturday morning. Well... morning for hungover people. Brunch time.

South Africans ordered food from a lot of food trucks. And then we hit the bar.
Too early for craft beer. So we got caguamones.

And...

Shots of mezcal.

We stayed there eating and drinking for three hours. Wasted before 3 p.m.

Those guys could drink.

We were being obnoxious and they were telling me all that we did the previous night... at a family-friendly place. All three at some point had two girls on top of us the previous night and we were talking about it loudly. I can't even imagine how much money we spent. It was way before 3 p.m. and I saw them spend around \$200 on drinks and food just that morning.

The waitress at Telefonica would bring us shots of mezcal, they would pound it, and ask for the next round before the waitress was even done serving them. We finished a bottle and a half from that bar that day.

Drunk and obnoxious telling stories of prostitutes, strippers, and debauchery surrounded by families. At least it was all in some weird English that I'm hoping not that many people could understand. But we were still loud and drunk very early.

By 5 p.m., one of the guys requested cocaine. So here I go to call my guy. Obviously, he took hours to get to me. But there. \$50 worth of cocaine. That's tons of cocaine in Tijuana.

• • •

Oh fuck. I haven't even explained how I met my coke dealer. It was at a poker game with

my weed dealer. I was winning. He provided coke. He got irritated when I was clearing the table. The bets weren't much money. So I let him win a couple times. Then he became my contact for cocaine. And he has the best cocaine I ever had.

Disclaimer: haven't seen this dude in years.

• • •

The Korean tacos were still around back then. We had some of those delicious weird salty tacos.

And then... they wanted to go back to El Zorro. We virtually repeated the previous night. I told them that Don Julio was probably the reason I blacked out. So we had Don Julio shots again at Nelson before El Zorro.

I became friends with the manager of that shit strip club that night. He told me that he has never seen that much money spent in his shitty club. And that they keep bringing me girls or drinks and I kept just saying no with my hand. One older woman stayed on my lap for most of the time. The South Africans were doing drugs, whores, and drinking like crazy.

Keep in mind this shitty strip club only has five or six girls working at the time. The place is a shithole. The private rooms are little improvised cubicles. The wall where the tiny stage is located has broken mirrors in a horrible fashion. Like they tried to do something creative but executed horribly.

It's a shit strip club. But it's also anarchy.

The beers are cheap for a place with naked women. The women are cheap. And you can see the battle-scars. And one of them is obviously a transsexual. But that's what they loved.

They loved how nitty-gritty it was. They also loved Hong Kong and Adelitas. But they said it didn't feel real. And they were too big. Too many girls.

At shitty El Zorro, it was as if they owned the place. And for the hours that we were there, we basically did own the place. That place can't be worth much.

Those two nights those fuckers probably spend over a thousand dollars each. Definitely more. And I got paid \$300 for two nights of partying with crazy South Africans. I blacked out both nights.

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Now when I walked by El Zorro, the manager likes to tease me with what happened that night. I am pretty sure I recognize the older prostitute that I had in my lap most of the time. I am pretty sure she doesn't recognize or remember me. I still see her from time to time on my way to Nelson.

Can you imagine the stories that a 40-year-old prostitute can tell?

I don't really want to know.

I live too close to all the debauchery.

And I'm obviously desensitized to it.

Like most of the people that come on a tour with me, they promised to come back. They said they had forgotten about Vegas after experiencing Tijuana. I haven't heard back from them since those two crazy wild nights. I wouldn't mind going full Mad Dog Mateo again.

As long as I'm getting paid for it.

CHAPTER 16: REALITY SHOW APPEARANCE AS FAKE MAD DOG MATEO

So, I was in a reality show over the weekend. My tour were British guys following a commercial pilot. I signed a non-disclosure agreement, so I don't think I am allowed to talk much about this but fuck it.

They were five guys total, don't remember anyone's name except Noah, one of the camera guys, and Christian, the star of the show. There was another camera guy, a sound guy with a boom mic, and the director. The pilot and the director were the main show. A clap would initiate the takes. Some crazy shit I've never been part of. Until now.

I talked a lot. I told some of the stories I already wrote here. The South African guys' story that was the previous chapter and the story about the pilots which was earlier at some point.

I said things I might regret. Similar to the things I'm writing here.

No regrets.

Fuck it.

It was a fake tour for a reality show. Fake Tijuana Adventure. Fake Mad Dog Mateo.

Fake reality show. Nothing new here.

The tour was basic, I didn't even plan it much. I didn't think of it. I just improvised like always. It started with my basic explanation about the city and why

Tijuana exists. We walked to Norte Brewing Co. for the sunset views of the city. Here, I told the story of the pilots on camera to a reality tv show pilot. I ignored the cameras and just acted natural.

I'm going to hate it once it's out. And people in Tijuana are going to give me so much shit about it.

After Norte, we moved to street tacos. Las Amigas never disappoint and it's an interesting taco stand. I found out that the star of the show was a vegetarian here. Good job telling me about that before rolling cameras.

All the guys got one taco, but we wanted more food. We had a second dinner at Cine Tonalá. They didn't want to drink or party for real. More like do it for the cameras and move on. The meal or drinks didn't get recorded. It was like a break from work.

After done with the second dinner, they started recording again. Us exiting the Cine and talking casually about the meal. From there they had one request. Strip clubs where they could record.

And of course, there is only one shitty strip club that would allow us to do such a thing without a warning. El Zorro. Yes. The same one with the South Africans just from the previous chapter.

I convinced the bouncers and waiters to let us film. We told the girls that they weren't going to be on camera... and none of them were attractive.

We ordered a bucket of beers but didn't drink any. I ran to the bathroom quickly, and when I came out, the girls were all over the guys. A fight ensued between the director and the pilot. The pilot went to get a private lap dance. The producer stormed out with the cameras following behind.

It's a reality show.

That was planned. The girls thought it was real and were scared "tus amigos se pelearon y se fueron," they said. We just left the strip club leaving the bucket of beers behind. The director "stormed out" and left the main character stranding. They "call each other" to "find each other" though they were really just half a block away.

After they "reunited," I walked them through Zona Norte and told them they couldn't film here or to be careful. The camera guy started filming as the "paraditas" or the street prostitutes ran for cover while hiding their faces.

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“Están grabando!” I would hear them say to each other and scramble to hide. Never seen that before.

A cop started following us. I told them to ignore it and we kept walking. But then he blasted his siren and stopped us. I said I would handle it and expected the worst. It was the complete opposite. He told us that if we needed anything to let him know or give him a call. He was super excited to see the cameras and told us to record whatever we wanted. It seemed like he wanted to be on the show. So the crew kept filming. They were live bandas being loud and they filmed that.

It might be some of the best recordings of Zona Norte and it was only 9 p.m. And now I know, if you enter Zona Norte with a bunch of gear, the cops are fine with it, the prostitutes are the ones that hide and hate it.

And then it was over. Walked back to the border. I offered them more places to visit and drink. Nope. They were done. The job was done. Short fake Tijuana Adventure. I got paid. Signed the contract. And took them to the border.

I wonder what will happen next with them. I wonder how the show turns out. They don't really even know where it's going to appear. Or maybe they did and they just didn't want to tell them. Netflix maybe? YouTube? Maybe only in Europe?

Oh shit. I just Googled it and it has an IMDB.

“A documentary filmmaker follows his best friend, a widowed airline pilot, around the world as he looks for a new love via the TINDER Passport dating app.”

We did talk about Tinder and Bumble. So the premise they told me is real. No Tinder girls were met.

HOLY SHIT!

After more research... I've been duped.

The “pilot” was, in fact, the producer that I was in contact with. They told me the producer stayed back in LA setting up the next appointment. Nope. The producer was the main star the whole time. And obviously, his name wasn't Christian.

Holy fuck.

Nice one. Nice fucking one.

I should have googled these fuckers a bit more before I actually took them on a tour. They have two movies, one out with a bad rating and the other still in production. And now their new show.

Oh fuck.

What's going to happen to my appearance?

I might get heavily edited or cut. This show might not even be aired. But... oh well. Shit is done. I made some money. Tour is over. I have more tours coming up. A lot of people have been hiring me to film around Tijuana. Might as well change what my tours are about and help filmmakers and journalists.

They seem to have enough money to pay me.

CHAPTER 17: ENSENADA ADVENTURE

I have a tour in a couple hours. It's 16 people in total. Given their names, I'm pretty sure they are Hindu. Most are coming from New York.

I have no desire to do the tour. I'm sure it will go awesome. But I'm tired.

The tour previous to this one, another one that came to film a reality show, went horribly wrong. Just thinking about it makes me livid. I'll talk about that later.

• • •

This was a good week. April has been awesome and it just started. I made money left and right. A friend got married, I did the pictures. He paid me more than what I had asked for. I took way too many pictures. And a huge edit. I can still be better.

Got a bunch of other photo work done. I've been regularly busy.

The wedding was in Ensenada.

And here's the thing about Ensenada.

It's an awesome place to visit.

In a way, it's a glimpse of what Tijuana used to be. It's heavily visited by tourist Americans who are too afraid of Tijuana so they choose Ensenada. In this last visit, I saw that they sold bracelets that read "Fuck Trump." And also a racist yet somewhat hilarious bracelet that read "I <3 Nigga Pussy." There were a lot of black Americans walking the streets of Ensenada. I wonder what they would think of those bracelets. Or if the Mexicans selling them ever got in trouble. I'm pretty sure they get a kick out of it.

You know those woven bracelets that they sell in the touristy beaches of Mexico, right? They don't really sell those in Tijuana. Seeing that shit is like going back to the '90s. At some point, I wore those bracelets. A lot of them. That point was high school. So yeah. The late '90s.

Every damn time I go to Ensenada crazy wild shit happens. This was no exception.

And oh...

Of wild stories to tell. My life reads like fiction. The first time that Ensenada engulfed me was in 2014. I was broke at the time. I could barely afford rent. I lived day by day wondering when my next paycheck will come. I still live like that, but it's been getting better. My neighbor knocked on my door. He wanted to go to the Ensenada Beer Fest, Mexico's biggest and best craft beer festival. I told him I had 300 pesos in my wallet and barely any money in the bank. He said that it will be fine. He wanted company.

About where I was staying. He said not to worry, he had a house.

About getting into the beer fest, he said not to worry, he knows some people.

So out of nothing, I was suddenly on my way to Ensenada with my neighbor who I barely knew. Younger than me, but not by much, he was still going to college. I haven't seen him in forever. Cool guy. But I believe he lives in Mexicali now. We arrived at his house in Ensenada. It was his parents' house in pretty much the nicest neighborhood in the city. On top of the hill, overlooking downtown with views of the ocean and the port. I couldn't see much from the outside but it seemed like a pretty big house.

Where were his parents? "Don't worry about it, they won't be back," he said.

The house was locked.

He had no key.

So he called every locksmith in town to figure out a way to get in. But to do this, he dropped me off at the Ensenada Beer Fest. He left me at the mercy of some girl. I'm sorry that I don't remember her name. She was cool. I want to guess "Rosa," but I'm really not sure.

Rosa had extra tickets for the beer fest, so I joined her. And with the 300 pesos I had left, I got as much beer as I could. They were selling at 10 to 20 pesos the 4-ounce samplers. Plus, they were giving a lot free tasters. It was a lot of beer. The only bad

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memory I had about that day was at the Donkey Punch Brewery stand. They offered me a beer. Like literally offered me a beer without saying I was buying. They served me two glasses. It was clearly an indication of free beer. The festival was ending and this dude was serving everyone.

Then he charged me.

Fuck that shit. My final pesos gone.

I didn't hear from my neighbor. I never saw him at the Beer Fest. Rosa took me to a nearby bar. Red Lion. They have that in Tijuana (yep, the same as the first bar I went to.) It's a nice looking bar but generic and boring. Beers are cheap. Rosa bought me a big draft beer in a 1-liter bottle of Oso Negro Vodka, that's what they use for glasses, old bottles... There were other friends of hers there. I was tired and drunk and had no idea where I was going to sleep. I knew I had some money on my debit card, so I was thinking of getting a hotel for the night. \$30-40 hotel if possible. I knew I had at least \$100 in the bank.

Just as I was looking at the possibility of the hotel, Rosa told me that my neighbor called and that we should come to the house. Apparently, I went in and told everyone I felt like I was in an episode of House Hunters International. The house opened up to a beautiful living room with huge windows and a huge balcony with views of the port of Ensenada. It was truly astonishing. There were bottles of wine on the counter as well as some cocaine. The usual Tijuana celebrities were there.

I drank wine and mingled. But I don't remember much. I think I passed out on the couch. I did. I woke up at 6:00 a.m. in a bedroom by myself. I walked into this huge bathroom to drink from the sink and cool my head down. The towels were wrapped like fucking geese as if it was a fucking hotel room.

I walked out to the balcony and saw the huge looming house above me. I had no idea where I was. All I thought was, "sleep some more, it will all get clear if you sleep some more." I slept a bit more and then I got woken up by my neighbor who was tapping my forehead with a cold can of Coors Light. He was drinking one already.

"Let's go to my Grandma's and have brunch," he said.

Before figuring that out, we drank a bit and played Wii U as other people that crashed in the house were figuring out what to do as well. That was the first time I played Wii U. On the couch in the living room, there was a black, white, and gold cushion that read "My Other House is in Paris."

"Where are your parents?" I asked.

"In Paris," was the obvious reply.

His grandma's house was also a beautiful villa. Not as huge as the house overlooking Ensenada, but more of a traditional Mexican house with a nice patio with fruit-bearing trees. His grandma not only treated us to a traditional and amazing grandma brunch she brought out caguamas. So we drank beers with the *abuelita* while she told some horror stories that happened recently in the family. A horrible robbery that happened. It killed the mood a bit.

Fucking Ensenada.

But they were all fine still alive and healthy. So the mood lightened up and we drank more and ate more.

Later that night we met with more of his Ensenada friends. We were supposed to go back to Tijuana, but we ended up in a huge house with people drinking wine and smoking weed looking at the sunset in the magnificent balcony.

That was my first time in Ensenada. Ever since, I've had plenty of good times down there. The latest comes next.

. . .

Now I have to get ready for the tour. It's going to be a long one. I'm not totally ready. I do not want to do this.

I might retire soon. It's not the first time I've said that. But I'm burnt out. Tours take a toll.

CHAPTER 17.5: ENSENADA AGAIN AND THE LAST BACHELOR TOUR

That was a fucking gruesome tour. By the end of it, I told them I was retiring. They might have been the last bachelor tour I ever do. Fifteen fucking people. I guess one didn't show up. Or I was the sixteenth.

I was early for the tour. There was absolutely no border wait line. I was supposed to meet them at the border at 4:00 p.m. I crossed by 3 p.m., didn't see them until almost 5:30 p.m. The bachelor was wasted already. He had been drinking since waking up at around 8ish a.m. His brother seemed to be in control.

It was around 7 American-Hindu guys, one Hindu with an accent, and the rest white boys. Sorry for the generic description. My tours tend to be one big blur. I think I've done around 20 bachelor tours, and I barely remember a single person. Except for Ted. Ted was great. I still have to tell Ted's story.

The tour started at Norte Brewing Company. The views and the beers there are always killer. Moving around 15 people is a pain in the ass.

The bachelor requested Mision 19. We actually reserved the place, but it's outside of downtown. Moving 16 people to Mision 19 was a real tough mission. You could say it was an impossible mission.

Ok. You can stop reading me now...

So I decided to skip Mision 19 and convinced them it was the right move. Not

only that, fuckers were already wasted and obnoxious. And I'm not taking them to Mision 19 like that. Improvising is the name of the game.

I led them to La Cevicheria Nais. On the way there, the bachelor hired mariachis to follow him around and play music. Hilarious stuff. I went directly to the manager of La Cevicheria Nais and told him I had a bachelor party of 16 people. They shuffled so quick to get a giant table ready for us in the back of the restaurant. The service, like always, was great. Pricey. But great.

The total check was around \$850+ tip for 16 guys who drank a bottle and a half of tequila, more than 20 mezcal old fashioned drinks, I saw a few mezcalitas going around, and a couple of beers. Also, two or more tacos each and a few specialty plates.

Point is, it was a feast. And a drunken feast. The manager of the place came to the bachelor to give him the classic tequila shot from the bottle directly in his mouth and shook his head around.

And from there, to Hong Kong. The biggest craziest brothel I've ever seen. Some guys even said the same thing. They've been to clubs in Southeast Asia, nothing like this.

Seriously. FUCK THAT PLACE.

It's so good at first, but it's so bad once you are burnt out. Fuck that place.

But if I'm there... I have to enjoy myself. Can't be at Hong Kong and not get "Chinese food." And by that I mean, I chose one girl from the hundreds and buy her drinks for her to sit on my lap and dance. She also helped me not to lose the guys. Which was hilarious. Her name was Merlina.

Hah!

Fucking Merlina. Like a creep, I asked her for her real name later. Then she showed me pictures of her kids and her American boyfriend. She was only 20-years-old. Divorced. She got married at the age of 16. How that is a thing in Mexico still, I have no clue. She said that it was normal for her and her family. And she was happy to be divorced and working there. She was adorable. But for some reason, her two front teeth were heavily discolored. And her teeth weren't bad, they didn't seem crooked or anything. Just the front two were yellow.

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The tour ended at 1ish a.m. Some guys wanted to stay. But instructions of the bachelor and the brother were that everyone must go together back to the border. Somehow I got them all together. Three were lost. So I took the rest of the party to get tacos while I went looking for the missing guys. What a fucking shitshow. But it all ended well.

We walked back to the border. It was dark as fuck. The scary bridge with flickering lights didn't even have lights this time. But it's 16 dudes. And one guy was 6'8. I doubt robbers want to mess with that group.

By the way, the guy that was 6'8 took a girl to the hotel room and said he couldn't do anything because the girl said he was too big. He wanted to complain, but that doesn't really work in Hong Kong and plus fuck it. That sounds like a good excuse to not be with a prostitute.

Mission successful. I made decent money plus tips. But holy fuck is that shit tiring.

And after I dropped them at the border, I had money in my wallet and had the desire to go back. But not to Hong Kong. Just another shitty club in the area. I've learned my mistakes at Rio Verde but for some reason, it was calling me. That place is a dirty drug-fueled mess. Before stepping in, I decided against it. So I went to my classic cantina for a beer.

That was not enough. On my walk home, I decided to check out a drag show at Villa García bar. And that bar turns out to be a gay Hong Kong or something. So many guys hit on me that night. I accepted a couple of Tecate Lights. There were beautiful transsexual women at a corner of a bar. There were also a lot of non-passable crossdressers.

And 10 guys only wearing underwear running around and dancing on everyone. It's a riot. Gays have beyond great sex life and I'm jealous of it. But I couldn't. I lied about my name, told them my name was Charlie. I lied about where I was from, told them I was from Texas. I didn't even speak Spanish to anyone.

So for a couple hours, I was gay Charlie. And I'm happy to say that a lot of gay guys find me attractive. An older gay couple came to me and told me I was cute and bought me more beer. Transsexuals were giving me the eye. One of them danced on me

and then she got mad because she tried to kiss me and I turned away. Other gay guys tried their luck and I played hard to get.

I felt like a pretty whore.

. . .

This chapter was the continuation of Ensenada. It wasn't meant to talk that much about bachelor parties. I can't Ensenada as well as I can Tijuana. I won't do Valle de Guadalupe tours because I barely know the place. And every time I go it changes. Plus, it's expensive. And I don't know much about wine.

If you have the chance to go to Valle de Guadalupe... fucking do it. The same goes with Ensenada. It's an awesome place to visit. And I want to do it more often. Though I don't know much about Ensenada, I ended up being a tour guide there last weekend. I knew more than the Americans I was with that had absolutely no clue about Ensenada. Texting my friend Kelvin also helped. He told me where the party was at.

Before the wedding, it was some sort of bachelor tour, but not quite. My friend is not into strippers and refused to go to the strip club in Ensenada. The best one, supposedly, is Paris de Noche. I still have never been. From what I heard the next morning, it wasn't very good. Or not nearly as good as Hong Kong.

Instead of that, we went for street tacos, walked to downtown, did Cantina Husson's because it's the classic cantina in Ensenada. It was packed, so we moved out after the first beer. Everything seemed shitty and like a tourist trap.

Kelvin came up with the suggestion of Distrito Barra Pública. He nailed the suggestion. Quiet place with a nice patio with great beer. Exactly what the party wanted. And after that, everyone went back to their hotel for the wedding the next morning.

My hotel? The groom of the wedding got an Airbnb for me and other people at the wedding. It was next to the house I stayed at four years ago. It was a really nice big house, but not as huge as the house next door. Ocean views, it could easily fit 8+ people and it was only \$150 a night. And the first night, only me and the groom's brother stayed there. On the kitchen counter, the owners left us a bottle of wine. How romantic.

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It wasn't awkward, but it did feel like a waste of space. So for the second night, we invited more people to stay with us after the wedding.

Oh.

And the wedding. Wedding was work for me. I also ended up being a translator in general. I ran around everywhere and took thousands of pictures. When my flash died and the party was, in general, winding down, I sat down exhausted and had some more beer.

Yes. I drank throughout the wedding. I take better pictures that way.

I don't know how it happened. I just know that I was telling her, "are you sure you want to do this?" while calling an Uber to the Airbnb. I also remember making out with her.

Who was her?

Well, the wedding didn't really have that many attractive women except the bride and older women. And she was old. Yet attractive. And weddings plus Ensenada. That's just a cocktail for disaster.

An actual GILF. She was more than double my age. Again. I don't know how it happened. But I took her to an Uber back to the Airbnb with me and we woke up naked next to each other. That's all you need to know.

And some in the party found out, because on my way back to Tijuana from

Ensenada, they asked me about it. And they saw me as some sort of legend. And the reassurance from the guy that was the same age as me that he would have done the same is nice.

It was one week ago. And I'm still in shock.

. . .

Sorry, mom.

Hope you never read this but I'm sure you will.

. . .

Now to move on. I have tons of photo work to do. That's why I might retire my tours. I'm making good money with pictures. And if all this that I'm writing makes me good money, then fuck. Tours are done for sure. Or just making them hella expensive.

Money is good. Mokay?

And my upcoming homework is great. The taco issue. I get to eat tacos, photograph them, and write about it.

That's what I am doing for the next couple of days. Then more work work work. And soon to be finished with this.

CHAPTER 18: FUCK HOLLYWOOD + BAD TOUR.

Everything fucking hurts.

And I haven't done much work at all in the past couple of days. All I've done is eat tacos and take pictures of tacos. Scribble little notes that will turn into decent text next. That will be the money I earn this week. It could be so much more. But I'm a lazy fucker.

Everything hurts because I went to play tennis with my buddy Tony yesterday. First time I do any sports in years. I have a blister on my middle finger. It grew and burst in the second set of the match.

Guess who won?

I fucking won.

Both times coming from behind. Both times sets were 7-5. Good game.

. . .

Speaking of my middle finger. Here's what happened a few weeks ago. Or a month ago. Whatever. Thinking about it still pisses me off.

I got contacted by email for a tour like I usually do. The guy didn't tell me much about what they were looking for but insisted on talking on the phone. This was on the same email as the bachelor party email since I received both that same morning. And I'm a busy guy.

Fuck did I pay much attention to a guy who didn't tell me much but wanted to talk on the phone. The guy called me while I was at Mason Ale Works in San Diego after

photographing a rugby training for the city's new team. I was hanging out with another writer and we were invested in our conversation about writer stuff while drinking and eating.

Guy spoke in Spanish, which was confusing, then he switched to English. Guy told me what he wanted. Something about a Netflix show. A guide to make them feel safe in the city. Blah blah blah. I didn't pay much attention. I get plenty of tours like that and this wasn't urgent at all. The main thing. They wanted safety. As if fuckers would get killed the moment they touch TJ. Weeks later, Guy emails me and CCs Gal.

Gal seems terrified about Tijuana and asks about safety plenty of times. Gal was coordinating the hotel they were staying in and asked me plenty about it. This city has probably a hundred hotels. It's obvious which are the shitty ones. They end up booking a decent one. Not the best, but in a nice area and a decent hotel. To meet them it was a fucking mess. They switched up the way to meet a couple of times. They ended up driving across on a white van and I saw them outside of Costco. Five people in the white van. The driver, who seemed cool. Gal who seemed nervous. English dude who was calm and quiet. Douche Hollywood oldish looking dude with old-leathery skin. Greek fucker who seemed to be the man in charge.

The Guy that booked the tour wasn't there. I directed them to their hotel. While on the drive, they discussed plans and they still kept secretive about what they were doing in Tijuana. All good so far. Even though I still have no clue what I was doing. I'm great at improvising and I can handle all of it.

Finally at the hotel. They all seem stressed and indecisive. They make me sign a non-disclosure agreement before they say anything to me. Yes. I went through it. It seemed alright.

. . .

I just Googled the company. I can't find anything about it except the office's in Los Angeles. Coincidentally, they are near my old office in Los Angeles when I used to work for National Photo Group. I can't find anything else about these fuckers.

. . .

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English dude and Greek dude start telling me what they want. It was a tall order and out of nowhere, I had to figure out all of the next day.

They wrote me a list.

I needed to find a charity or something charitable and it couldn't touch the subjects of migrants because it was too political (orphanages preferred.) We needed a dangerous-looking Tijuana. Something something something. And last, but not least, we needed someone that was willing to go on camera and say that Mexico is too dangerous to drive through.

I told them they were wrong, that they could do the trip if they wanted to. I met a guy who ran from Vancouver to Argentina pushing a stroller. He went through Mexico and received nothing but support. I've met dozens who drove from Tijuana to South America and nothing has happened. Yes, there are many cases gone wrong, but they had a shitty white van. The chances of something happening were very low, and they were going to drive through South America anyway, which could be worse.

And at the end of the list, the name of the show, they told me to watch some that night to figure it out... AND DELIVER ALL the next morning.

Fuckers are crazy.

And for what? Like \$300-400? Fuck it. I was going to do it. I could handle it. Extra money is always nice and I had already planned my days for this tour. I accepted the gig and put the list of demands in my back pocket.

The show followed the English dude around the world because he was a traveling expert. Something like that Man vs. Wild show with Bear Grylls that everyone knows it was staged and that fucker was staying in hotels. Same with this English dude. He was staying in the hotel and staging everything else. And here's where the non-disclosure takes place. Obviously, fuckers don't want to disclose to their viewers about this.

Hopefully, I've been vague enough to not be in trouble. And, to be honest, the show is suspicious, the company is suspicious, so I doubt I'll get in trouble. If I do, and you are reading this, and you are a lawyer, hit me up!

Time to eat. I was starving. Everyone was starving. Except for the English dude, "the reality star." He wanted to stay in the hotel. The driver wanted to know where

to find massive burritos. Technically an American thing, massive burritos are not common in Tijuana. There are a few places though. Driver dude was cool. I took the passenger seat and directed him to Teléfonica. He told me he stayed in a hotel nearby not that long ago.

Gal was all nervous the whole time. She seemed to take abuse from the producers or something. Hollywood douche was being a Hollywood douche. Never took off his sunglasses. I never saw his most likely squinty little shit-eyes of Hollywood douche superiority. And Greek dude, well, he is the one I had the most issues with.

While driving around, Greek dude asked me frequently where the shitty parts of town were and if it was safe to film in certain places. I told him that shit parts were just a good twenty minutes south and that yes, he can film anywhere as long as he doesn't film cops. He had no interest in the city of Tijuana or anything else at all except seeing some shit areas for the camera, which are not that difficult to find.

But first food, right?

This is what happened.

We got to Teléfonica. The place is packed. Many of the people there are obviously American. Teléfonica always has tons of Americans. You can hear their conversations in English. I'm doing the usual tour telling they have many options. I tell the driver that Satabu has big burritos for around \$7. He is excited. I tell the Greek guy there's a Greek place, he shrugs the whole place off. Like he was way above it. Gal was nervous and said she wanted a vegetarian taco. Hollywood douche said nothing and just talked to the Greek guy.

I led Gal to La Taqueria Veggie which is amazing vegan food. They have a taco truck in San Diego and they are doing great. I tell her they have insane veggie tacos there. But Gal just wants tortilla and lettuce, nothing of the fake meat or anything else. It made no sense.

Instead of all choosing their own place, the Greek guy tells me to order for all in one place. That didn't make sense either. I tell him to walk around and choose. Gal is stressing me out because she can't order a taco to save her fucking life.

They acted like babies. As if the border fucked their whole views. Except for the Driver. The Driver was cool. So my intention was to please him first since he was the

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easiest to deal with. I took him to Satabu and told him about the burritos and he started figuring it out himself, so I was happy.

I went back to the other group who were arguing amongst themselves. The Greek fucker pulls out his phone and says, "I see there is a Chili's nearby, this is like American Chili's, yes?" Yep. He had a shitty Greek accent. A good looking douchebag with a Greek accent. No wonder he was so entitled. I tell him that indeed that is American Chili's. He says he'd rather go there because he is afraid that the food in Teléfonica will give him food poisoning as he rubbed his stomach, indicating he was sensitive.

I lost my shit a bit. I asked him if he was serious. He said he was. He was concerned about getting a stomach-ache. And he made it seem like I should understand. As in "look at this shithole." Fucking Teléfonica, packed with Americans and everyone eating happily. That place has never failed me. I've taken so many tourists and everyone loves it. Not everything is perfect, the place has its flaws. But it never fails me.

I asked him again. This time added the "fucking serious."

He said "yes."

That's when I truly lost my shit. Asked him if he hired a tour guide or just a prop for his stupid TV show that could say what he wanted on camera. He again said something like, "you understand, right?"

I said, "fuck no." I didn't need this shit. For some reason, I gave him his stupid list back. The name of the show was in there and to be honest, I don't remember the name at all. I tried Googling or finding the show... Can't find shit. And for reasons of the NDA I signed, I'm just going to leave it like that.

I yelled at the fucker, "the tour is over, I'm not your tour guide."

He then asked me if I was serious.

I said that if he was going to Chili's, I was.

He said, "fine then." The good old "we can manage without you."

And they can. Tijuana is not a dangerous disaster they make it seem. It is a bit, but only if you are stupid and ask for trouble. Not in Teléfonica or anywhere they were staying.

I could see the concerned look on Gal's face. The smug look on the Hollywood douche behind his boss producer also standing tall to his decision to go to Chili's.

I stormed out. But was confused because I was also hungry so I didn't know what to do.

So I stupidly just walked by them fuming. They looked confused. I wanted food but was too angry. I decided to walk out the backdoor, emailed the guy that "hired me" telling him that I left his group.

. . .

I left my black simple hoodie that my mom gave me for Christmas in their white van. I miss that black hoodie. That is what I regret the most...

. . .

I was still fuming, so I decided to call the guy that hired me. I told him why I left them behind. He seriously said: "what's wrong with Chili's?"

For fuck's sake. Don't hire a tour guide and then ask him to take you to fucking Chili's. And not only that, they basically wanted me to shit all over Tijuana. For a couple hundred bucks. For some Netflix show that was staged. Nope.

I was still fuming.

Nelson. My refuge. Beer. Calm down.

I emailed him, angry still, but more tranquil. I felt bad for leaving them like that. I felt bad for the Driver who was cool and just wanted a giant burrito. I felt bad for the Gal who seemed to be scared shitless. I felt bad for the reality star guy who seemed nice, we talked briefly about soccer, and he seemed like a chill guy. I didn't give a shit about Hollywood Douche and the Greek Producer.

So in the email I included leads of what they asked for. The charities that they might want to work with. And the places that they should go to. But I also told him I was not their tour guide. And just because the Greek guy was the one that pissed me of the most I gave him the stupid analogy that what he was asking for would be similar to ask for a tour of the Parthenon, then tell the tour guide to talk shit about Greece and it's

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failing economy, and to top it off, to take me to McDonald's because I'm afraid of Greek food.

I never got a reply. I'm not sure if they cared. I'm not sure what happened to them. I'm not sure what they ended up doing. I don't know if they got another tour guide that helped them out with all their shit. I don't know if they did it solo. I don't know if I'll ever end up watching the show.

That was the most livid I've been in a long time, and writing about it again made me livid. Fuck those Hollywood douchebags. Fuck Hollywood in general. I hated (almost) everything about living there.

As silly as it was, I was angry for the next following days. Fucking Chili's. If you like Chili's, I understand. There are many places in America where the best choice is Chili's or Applebee's. But if you are traveling to a different city and hire a tour guide, asking for Chili's in a place with so much amazing great food, well, simply FUCK YOU.

That was the second tour I have ever canceled. The first one was early when I started the tours. The guy that wanted a tour was only going to pay me \$25. When I met him, he was obviously strung out. The guy was already in Tijuana in a seedy hotel and wanted someone to connect him with a dealer for heavy drugs. He said this to me five minutes after meeting. I told him I wasn't his tour guide and left him.

• • •

And now I'm getting bombarded by emails from real work. I have a busy weekend coming up. Lingerie pictures with sexy girls tomorrow, that will be a first, let's see how that goes. I have to cover a Food Bank event and dress in my tuxedo again. And finally, more rugby pictures on Sunday. And more pictures of tacos.

I should wrap this up and actually talk about Tijuana instead of all the stupid shit I do.

CHAPTER 19: AN ACTUAL GUIDE PART 1: TACOS + BEER. NEVERMIND... COCKTAILS.

I'm almost done with my text for the taco issue. I went to food porn places that some dude on Instagram name @Baja_Cali_Food posted. His food porn always makes me salivate, so I went to check out the places. One of them (El Nuevo Tecolote) is one of the best tacos I've had. The rest were more than okay, but I still prefer my neighborhood tacos.

Up next, going to San Diego to take pictures of tacos by other writers and the cover photo.

I have a sweet gig going. This is my third year doing the taco issue. And it will be my second taco cover.

Tacover.

Dumb.

The first tacover was at my friend's taco/torta truck named Corazón de Torta. I didn't choose the location, someone in the office did. Turns out they are cousins. A sneaky way to make the cover. And my hand was on the cover.

Corazón de Torta was barely opening and it wasn't that great, but I've been back recently and holy shit. I can easily say they have the best tongue taco in the region, better than most of Tijuana, and only beaten by Birrieria Guadalajara in Ensenada. Guadalajara (the city) has the best tacos de lengua I have ever tried. But this is not about

Guadalajara or San Diego. This is mostly about Tijuana and just a bit of Ensenada.

I do declare sir! Tijuana has the best tacos in the mother fucking world. Just hands down. Best tacos in the world. And I'm going to take it a step further. We even have the best beer in the world. An outrageous claim, but that's the reason I live here. And it is all insanely cheap! Especially if you earn dollars.

Fuck do I love this city. And most people only come to get with prostitutes and leave. Not knowing the food and beer paradise behind the dirty streets. It's crazy how much food and drinking there is. Tijuana's cocktail game is not to par with other places in the world. I can only name a handful that prepares great cocktails and just a dozen places that can perhaps make a cocktail. Let's get it out of the way.

Nortico, the speakeasy behind Oryx Capital probably has the best cocktails, but they pricey! It's a great experience to take people to Oryx, then lead them to the bathroom and to the secret green wall. Every once in a while I meet people that know about Oryx and still don't know about the speakeasy. Drinks here are going to cost \$10+ each. That's dollars. So yeah. Pricey but worth it. Their menu rotates, so no idea what they have, but it has never failed to impress me.

Tras/Horizonte follows closely. They had a bartender from San Francisco that ended up being an alcoholic and fell in love with a girl that I dated briefly. Now they live somewhere else. Fucking Tijuana. Anyway. Their cocktails are flashy, very inspired, and good, but lack the alcohol taste. I've probably drank a couple and felt nothing. Also. Pricey. Drinks are actually better priced than the food, maybe because Tras/Horizonte used to be Kokopelli, which used to be so good and cheap. And now it hurts to pay almost triple for their tacos, when a few years back were better and way cheaper.

By the way, everything might have changed by the time you read this. Everything might change tomorrow.

This city changes way too fast.

• • •

What I try to do in my tours is download the map of the city that my brain has into other people's brains. But that's impossible. We're not machines, not just yet.

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I do have a map similar to Metroid Prime's Gamecube style of mapping. The 3D map. If you played the game you know the joys of navigating that map. In fact, they did everything right in that game. It should be played more. I should play more Metroids.

. . .

Continuing with the cocktail list... let's keep it simple. The other two were not in downtown Tijuana, and downtown is my stomping grounds.

Bar Nelson. Find me there on a regular basis, though less and less each day since there is no oxygen in the bar, only cigarette smoke. I'm going to die of lung cancer before any of those smokers.

Bar Nelson is cheap. Cocktail experts, not really. It's a divey bar and the main bartender and owner knows what they are doing. They can whip up a cocktail. Erica makes a great margarita. And everyone goes for the "especiales" which used to be called "mamadas" years before. They've had the same especial for decades. It's a salt-rimmed glass with lemon juice, cheap white rum, Coke and Sprite. The original recipe was Bacardi, but now they use this cheap-ass bottle called "Ron Castillo." Old people go to Nelson. Young people go to Nelson. It's a spectacle. And I'm that asshole that plays jazz in the jukebox.

It happened yesterday. The bartender, Liz, lost the coin toss, so she said: "go play jazz." She hates jazz. Almost everyone hates jazz. I don't get it. I enjoy it. A lot. But who knows...

Yesterday though, I took it too far. Four jazz songs in a row is too much for bar attendees. I heard what I presume was a gay patron shout out "who is playing this crappy music?" I can tell he was gay because of the way he said and the way he looked. Yes. My gaydar is semi-accurate. I can also tell because the whole table seemed to be gay. His shirt was on too tight. And he had green hair in a stylish fashion.

Nelson. Boom. Roasted.

La Justina and Cine Tonalá both are newish, have fancy cocktails, and they are doing a decent job, but a bit pricey. La Justina is much better at it, but their food got stupid small and expensive. It's more enjoyable to just get a couple of drinks and munch on their free popcorn with ash and salt.

Don't try the Old Fashioned at Cine Tonalá. I told the owner this and she told me they made it better. It's still not good. I've had better Old Fashioned at dive bars in the US than this fancy cocktail place. I got to tell her again, but I'm not buying it. She'll serve me one, once she comes back from Europe. The rest of the cocktail menu is pretty good. They have mezcal and some gin drinks that are refreshing. Their beer menu is a mess. The food is hit or miss. Some of it is delicious and well priced, some of it is way overpriced for how tiny it can be.

Try the Santa Tlali maracuya (passionfruit) mezcal. My ex used to love the beet and spinach salad with goat cheese. I enjoy their burger, dare to say one of the best in town. But that's not saying much. Tacos are what's best here. Burgers, not so much. I mean, I'll probably take In N' Out over almost any burger in TJ.

I just tried a burger in San Diego at a place called "The Friendly." They don't give you options, they just serve you this dirty greasy double cheeseburger that would make Randy from Trailer Park Boys proud. Dirty greasy bomb perfection for \$5. I could munch on those fuckers forever and then die of diarrhea.

That's pretty much it for cocktails! All dive bars carry the standards, but not every bartender knows what they are doing besides opening beers and pouring tequila shots.

Oh shit!

Almost forgot El Tinieblo inside La Cevichería Nais. That place has a Smokey Old Fashioned made with mezcal that is killer. They also have "mezcalitas," margaritas made with mezcal and they are all tasty as fuck. There's the Pulp Friction, which is a chamoy-based mezcalita, La Cuchi Cuchi, which is like the classic mezcalita, a mango one, a spearmint one that is perfect to cleanse the palate for whatever the fuck you are gonna do next.

And the food is amazing. The ambiance is great too. The service is a bit too much, they take your napkin away as soon as you barely wrinkle it. Dudes. Relax. I don't need my barely dirty napkin taken away immediately.

The cocktail list is extensive and it has never disappointed.

So yeah.

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For the best cocktails in downtown, El Tinieblo, which is getting remodeled right now, inside La Cevicheria Nais, which is your only option right now due to the aforementioned remodeling.

Honorary mention: Caesar's Restaurant. I actually don't think I've ever had a cocktail here. I just know I trust that they can actually do good work. Caesar's is a Tijuana staple. The place where the Caesar Salad was invented, though it has changed. It was acquired by the Plascencias in 2011 (I believe) and remodeled. It's a bustling success. They have great live music on some nights. Their menu is extensive and most of it is delicious. Avoid the salmon fingers, but do go for the tuetano (bone marrow) or for their oysters Rockefeller. The best thing about Caesar's? It's not that expensive.

It wasn't that long ago that I was sitting with the publisher/editor of one of the only surviving real surf magazines out there, The Surfer's Journal. He read my articles before and wanted to chat with me. I ended up hanging out with the guy at Caesar's for a couple hours drinking and snacking. We had a couple beers each, a couple shots of mezcal, Rockefeller oysters, and something else I forget. But the check was \$38 or something like that. He was happy.

We then went to Valle de Guadalupe the following day to Finca Altozano for his interview with Javier Plascencia, Tijuana's most coveted chef. That's the second time I'm in his presence, but the first time I actually sit with him at a table. He is a chill guy living the best life you can possibly imagine. Busy as fuck. But who wouldn't want to be him? The "inventor" of Baja-Med, the trendy, tasty cuisine of this region. Octopus is his strength. Octopus is the strength here. And seafood in general. And tacos. Fucking tacos. That's what I was going to write about and look how deviated I got.

Other honorary mention, the classic of classics, Dandy Del Sur. I started going there lately instead of Nelson. The main reason is NO SMOKING ALLOWED at Dandy's. I can breathe.

It's a classic. Almost legendary. People come from far to drink at Dandy's. Dandy's: where Anthony Bourdain set foot to have a drink with la Señora Aida whose birthday is one day before mine. They have their picture framed in the bar.

And I got a VIP card. I didn't do anything to deserve it but pay 250 pesos (around \$14 at the time I bought it). It guarantees 2x1 on any first (national) drink every day.

The card pays for itself in 7-10 visits. It has other perks, but the best is the 2x1.

They suck at cocktails. They are strong and not well mixed. They also have their own "especial," but I haven't bothered to try it. I know about their cocktails because they have specials depending on the day. 3 whiskeys for 90 pesos (\$5). Straight up shitty whisky. Palomas 2x1. Fucking shitty ass palomas. Cuba libres. Shitty. I'm not sure if they can actually prepare actual drinks. I guess I'll have to venture into cocktails there, but I would rather just get a couple of beers 2x1 and get out.

That's what I did yesterday. After visiting the new Mamut taproom on Calle Sexta, what used to be Praga 2, what before was the shitty strip club that I mentioned with Hudson and Penner. Right across from Dandy del Sur. Near La Cevicheria Nais. All this shit is nearby. And there are still dozens of bars and restaurants that I haven't ventured.

And that's just downtown Tijuana. When I go to other regions of the city it feels like I went to another city.

. . .

I have a sexy photo shoot in an hour and I haven't had breakfast. This turned out to be about cocktails. Next will be about tacos. Or perhaps beer. Beer is going to be extensive, should save that for last.

About the sexy photoshoot, this is newgrounds for me. I had a friend model for me a couple times and she is sexy as hell, but it was more urban wear that looked like an American Apparel ad or something. Not really because AA likes to use exotic and really young looking chicks. This girl has a rocking body, but a tomboy feel. The point is, it was sexy, but not as sexy as the next.

I did a different sexy shoot with a different friend. She got semi-naked, the only problem is she isn't that hot. It was still a fun shoot and turned out some great frames that she liked. So that she is happy means I'm happy. And today, in an hour or so. Yep, an hour.

Another friend designs lingerie for "suicide type" looking chicks. You know, like goth lingerie. So I'm meeting two models who I have no idea who they are and taking

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pictures at a laundromat for a lingerie brand. I'm sort of nervous, sort of excited. Let's see how it goes.

I'm not getting paid, so I should actually do some real work after. I have two paid gigs lined up this weekend. I'm set.

CHAPTER 20: AN ACTUAL GUIDE PART 2: FOOD + TACOS

It's a slow Friday, so fuck it, why not write to feel productive for a change. Billie Joe Armstrong, the singer of Green Day, was here in Tijuana yesterday with his new project The Longshot. I wanted to go to just take a picture of him. I didn't. I'm a lazy fucker and I hate crowds of people.

I regret it a bit.

The past couple of weeks have been nothing but eating and taking pictures of tacos. And writing about tacos. It's the third time I'm part of the special edition about tacos for the magazine I work for. The second time that I'm in charge of the cover picture. My section is obviously all about Tijuana. More specifically, Tijuana taco porn.

I've been writing and taking pictures of tacos for several years now. There are way too many to cover with a simple list. Some that I liked have disappeared. Some I have yet to discover.

This is taco city.

This is everything city.

Drug city.

In recent news, an American Pale Ale called Juan Cordero by Insurgente just won a gold medal on the San Diego International Beer Competition.

Fauna from Mexicali and Rámuri from Tijuana got bronze on the World Beer Cup.

Beer city.

Tacos el Rey has been around since the '70s. I've been living next to them for more than four years. A couple dozen full moons ago, I was eating at Tacos el Rey on acid with two girls: my used-to-be-neighbor and some chick who was coming from Houston.

We went to a show at Mous Tache.

HEY! That's where Billie Joe Armstrong was last night.

I don't remember what show I was there for. All I remember was the bad trip when I thought the Houston girl was into me, I tried to grab her hand, and got rejected.

Mistake.

And I remember eating in Tacos el Rey and la tortillera looking at me in the eyes and saying: "ya te ves bien mal Mateo, vete a dormir Mateo."

I didn't return to Tacos el Rey for months after the embarrassment. I still go there at least once a month. They are still so incredibly good.

I did so much acid that year, even played a show on acid.

The new tacos I found are called "El Nuevo Tecolote." They aren't close to my apartment, so I don't think I'll go that often, but they are delicious. The carne asada is prime rib and their adobada is more like al pastor.

Near my apartment, there are more than a dozen taco choices. In downtown Tijuana alone, there are over 100 taco places to eat.

So yeah.

I can't cover them all.

Next to Tacos el Rey is Tacos Los Albañiles. They are pretty okay, but expensive and they cater to pochos: Mexican-Americans coming down from L.A. It looks like a taco place from L.A. It feels like a taco place from L.A.

There's a fish and shrimp taco truck nearby called Mariscos San Francisco. I like the batter they use there, so I usually get two fish and one shrimp. That's breakfast. It costs me less than \$3.

There is another fish and shrimp place called Los Compadres. I don't like their batter there, but they have the best camarón enchilado ever. It's greasy, it's lava hot, it's packed with shrimp and cheese, it's the correct amount of spicy and it could be spicier if you like, and most importantly, it's fucking dirty, just like the Tijuana gods intended.

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I've been going to Los Compadres for many years now. Both Los Compadres and Tacos el Rey were recommendations from Danger Dave.

Most people in Tijuana think El Mazateño is the best enchilado in town, and though it's good. It can't compare to the power of Los Compadres. And I'm sure there are many more and some better places. But these are the ones I know.

Tijuana is way too big, changes way too often, and it's ever-growing.

• • •

We just got a caravan of hundreds of migrants from Central America trying to cross into the United States. Guess where most of them will end up living?

Yep.

In Tijuana.

Migrant and deported city.

• • •

Back to tacoland. There are birria tacos by my house that are cheap and filling. They aren't necessarily good, but they aren't bad. They are the same as the popular tacos in Calle Cuarta. That place is always packed and everyone is yelling at the poor taquero for more. Seriously. It's a tiny corner with two taqueros and two dozen people that they want tacos or caldos de birria. If they only knew that the birria is the same in a couple other corners in town, it wouldn't be such a mess.

The one by the park near my house, Parque Teniente Guerrero, is usually empty. And they also have asada that looks tasty, but for some reason, I've never tried it. There are more taco places in the park. Tacos varios. Tacos al vapor. Tacos de birria. Tacos de mariscos. All kinds of tacos. Every corner has a plethora of different tacos. And more taco places are opening soon.

Then there are the tacos regarded as classic or best. Taconazo. Tacos el Franc or Tacos el Frances in Playas. Tacos los Perrones in Rosarito. Tacos El Polo. Los Salseados.

Classic fish tacos as well. Tito's Tacos, those are stupid cheap and everywhere. Aforementioned el Mazateño.

Classic cenadurías resembling central Mexico are everywhere and cheap.

Hipster place tacos. Telefónica has a plethora of hipster choices such as the vegan cauliflower mole, same place has the cactus and panela or the pork taco. That's La Carmelita. The pellizcadas there are my favorite. Telefónica also has the huitlacoche pulpo taco by Tacosteño. The spicy tuna tostada by Otto's grill. They have my favorite spicy salsa. It's tasty and it makes me cry. And more vegan choices with La Taquería Veggie. They recently opened in San Diego after major success in Tijuana.

Tacon Veggie is another hipster vegan choice that is great if you can catch them. They run out of tacos fast. And they might either grow or disappear soon.

Tacos el Gordo is another classic, but it's not that great. They now have locations in Vegas, San Diego, and other places. It started here in TJ. It's definitely good, but with the plethora of choices, you can find something better.

Tacos Coahuila or "where the prostitutes go eat." There was an article in Vice about this. I'm in the last picture of that article.

Tony Tee, famously the guy who took Anthony Bourdain around Tijuana, but also a major promoter of the city and in general a decent dude who just likes to party. Well, yeah. Him. He wrote an article about that place. We went together. I've been hanging out with him a bunch lately. We didn't for a while after he got mad at me for writing about his independent candidate, but that's all water under the fridge now.

Writing about politics.

Writing about food.

Writing about bullshit.

It all gets you in some sort of trouble.

As mentioned, Tony Tee now has his own food truck in San Diego. The tongue tacos his food truck serves is some of the best in the region. He is celebrating his one year anniversary tomorrow.

And tomorrow is also a Reddit meetup/tour with /r/Tijuana and /r/SanDiego. Out of the handful of Reddit meetings I've done, a couple have been nice and successful and still not worth it. I didn't organize this one, but I'm a part of it.

Let's see what happens.

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It's going to be a Border Psycho, one of the leading breweries in the Baja region. Their beer, it's not that great. It's more the marketing and name behind it. And collaborations that they've done with Mason Ale Works or other big breweries.

Ok.

And by saying not that great, I don't mean it's bad. I'm just spoiled. Beer changes here so often. Border Psycho started strong, opened a taproom in Plaza Fiesta that also started great, but then the staff and uncleanliness of the place ruined it. The taps weren't properly clean. All beer got infected. Also, their beers tend to have a heavy alcoholic taste and they tend to be high ABV. Their latest IPA called Hoptastic, that IPA is pretty good. They have a double IPA called La Perversa that's on the sweet caramel side instead of hops. Many other beers are drinkable but difficult to do more than one.

They had one special beer called "Beso Polacho" or Polish Kiss that was a "smoked wheat" beer or a Grodziskie, a very old style of beer not brewed often today. I thought it was excellent, but I was one of the very few that thought so.

It was very complex. It tasted like smokey bacon. Very dry and pungent. And surprisingly smooth to drink. Only a 2.8% ABV, or maybe 3.2%. Point is that it was light. I liked it. I'm never drinking that again because they are never making it again. Overall, they have been improving and going in the right direction and do not expect them to go anywhere.

Beers are next. I was on tacos. Border Psycho has a kitchen now, though not necessarily tacos. Their sopes are pretty good and filling. Burgers also decent, but sopes are better. Speaking of sopes, it's probably the best plate at Caesar's Restaurant, their tuetano sopes.

I used to go to Tacos Las Amigas, between 5th and 6th in Madero as a regular stop in my tours. I don't really like their tacos anymore, but they make huge tortillas on the spot. It's also one of the few places I've ever seen where the taquera is a woman and a man is the one that sweeps and cleans around the shop. In a sexist country like Mexico, it's nice to see something different.

Near Las Amigas, another great place: the aforementioned La Corriente Cevicheria Nais. Popular place. When I first got there, it was cheap and they had sold 8,000+ red snapper tostadas written on a blackboard near the kitchen. Nowadays,

prices have tripled and they have sold 220,000+ red snapper tostadas and have several locations and spinoff restaurants.

That was in just a couple of years.

La Corriente is still great. Two tacos or two tostadas is my recommendation, or one and one. Yes, the red snapper is probably the best still. Ahi tuna is second favorite. They have a new ahi tuna called Pacifico that I liked better but that they rarely have since it requires fresh scallops. Tacos: the chile with shrimp and cheese called Taco Kalifornia is one of my favorites, but also Cachondo (octopus) or Mazatlán (shrimp filled with marlin, wrapped in bacon.)

My new favorite thing there is to order the "Pulpo Pacheco" (stoner octopus), it's four big chunky pieces of octopus grilled with olive oil with a side of tortillas, vegetables, rice, and beans. AKA four great octopus tacos. Oh yeah. And their drinks are fucktastic too. I already mentioned them.

Circle jerk on the food of downtown Tijuana.

Tupidos is a classic restaurant with the usual Mexican menu, but on the side, they have handmade Tacos Varios. Next to Tupidos is Sanborns. Fuck that place. Just go in if you need to use the bathroom.

But also nearby, El Tucumano, an Argentinean empanada place. Just like La Corriente, I saw El Tucumano grow from a tiny place to a huge operation. They used to be in a tiny corner near Mous Tache. Argentinian empanadas with delicious chimichurri. And yes, I know Argentinians are going to be like, "fuck you we don't put chimichurri on empanadas." I'm aware. These empanadas are probably not Argentinian, however, they are delicious and cheap.

Near all, there are Chinese restaurants. If that's your thing, then go crazy. I can't even dozens of Chinese restaurants here. There are hundreds, if not thousands, in the city and some were caught serving dog meat a few years ago.

It's like there are more restaurants per capita than any other place I've been. A lot of Tijuanaenses eat out for all their meals. It's just cheaper. Especially when you earn in dollars. Food is everywhere. Everything is everywhere all the time.

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Except for a great delicatessen. Yep. A good ole deli. There is nothing like that. There are some cheese and meat stores that try, but usually overpriced and not that great.

I just need a classic deli where I can get a cheap sandwich to go. Preferably in a liquor store. A deli that sells caguamas and craft beer that is also a barbershop and tattoo parlor. Tijuana could use a place like that. Hipster bastardized the place to beyond Portland levels.

KoMe was a Korean taco place that had great tacos, but it was poorly executed. They lasted 9 months. I wished they didn't close. That was the last place I wrote for the food section in the Magazine. I couldn't deal with the editor. He turned a positive review into a negative one. My article didn't have anything to do with their demise, but I still feel bad. Their mistake was opening too big and simple. They should have done it small, secretive, and hipster. That's what Millennials want. Places that they only hear from word of mouth as great but that no one really knows the spot.

And Tijuana has a lot of those places.

There was a birria place by my house that also lasted less than a year. It was goat birria, which is rare to find up here. Almost everyone uses beef birria. I miss them. They were delicious, gamey, and cheap.

There's taco alley, called Las Ahumaderas. My first apartment was behind the taco alley. The smell from the five (now four) taquerías in a row would enter through my kitchen window. All the taquerías have a similar name to "El Paisano" except the fifth one that closed that was named LAS QUINCE LETRAS. "The Fifteen Letters," when counted, is actually fifteen letters. Dumb.

I would go to the same one (third from the corner) every Monday when their tacos de cabeza were 2x1. Get four tacos and a caguama from the store and barely spend any money. Being a regular, they opened the caguama for me, put it behind the counter, and serve me in a plastic cup.

The dollar was cheaper back then, but everything was also cheaper.

And there are tacos everywhere! In every single neighborhood. In every single place. All types of tacos.

I went to Otay for Tacos el Gallito recently. In the same street, I saw that there

were another dozen taquerías.

I went to La Cinco y Diez, which is barely halfway through the city, for Tacos Wichos, and on the way there, well, you could eat at three different taco stands for a whole year in Tijuana and not repeat a single one.

Fancy restaurants also tend to serve tacos.

There is a club called Esquivel that has a taquería inside near the dance floor called Mucha Muchacha. That's pretty new. Let's see how long it lasts (spoiler, it didn't).

And I barely even scratched the surface of how many tacos there are. Much less how much food you can eat.

There are secret foods as well.

I've only seen this one once, and that was before I even lived here. The morning mariscos. Apparently, the corner of 11th and Negrete (or somewhere around there) there is a little pop-up shop that sells only caldo de mariscos (seafood broth) from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. to drunk people. I was there once years ago when I was still living in LA. I wasn't hungry for seafood soup, so I didn't order. But there was a long line to order and a wedding arrived at the scene. I was too drunk to recall details, just thinking, "this is insanity." I haven't tried to get that seafood soup, but have heard from Uber drivers and others about the place. And supposedly the main guy died, left the place to his sons, and it's not the same as before.

Other secret or weird foods: a liquor store called El Oasis. They recently remodeled, but it's like a house that is also a store that is also a restaurant that sells giant ass clamatos and beer with whatever ingredient you want in the big gulp glasses from 7-Eleven. Two parrots sit inside the store annoying the customers.

My clamato with beer is using cheat codes. Right downstairs from my apartment sits Israel "el Buzito" son of El Buzo, or scuba diver. He has been selling ceviche tostadas and seafood cocktails in the corner below my apartment since the '80s. It was his dad's business, which Israel told me grew to several restaurants which closed, ending up back in the same corner.

His dad was an alcoholic, hence the name "Buzo," because scuba divers are always underwater, which apparently means he was always drunk. Israel is the complete opposite. He is a Christian gentleman that works hard to support his family

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in his little food cart. And this is where the magical clamato is. I get a caguamón of Tecate in the corner store and get a shrimp cocktail from Buzo, sometimes with clams and octopus, sometimes just shrimp. Eat a bit of the shrimp cocktail, then fill with beer, rinse and repeat.

Thanks, Chad. I think he originally did this and I just perfected it. That's one of the best breakfasts you can have on a hot day. Buzo told me where to pick-up the shrimp he uses. On Calle Sexta, there are a bunch of fish stores, like three straight blocks of just fish. He says the Chinese have the best and biggest shrimp at the best price. His shrimp cocktail usually has nice big shrimp.

Today. Today is fried chicken Friday at Voodoo Stu's. Dude that comes from Atlanta, married a Tijuana girl and has southern comfort food and gumbo shack in

the Pasaje Rodriguez art alley. Not sure how much longer he will last there either. This week, he is only opening today. He opens less than 6 days a month. Not sure how he stays in business. But I love it there and his chicken is fantastic. His side veggies always make me feel like I ate healthy, hearty, homemade southern food, or at least I like to deceive my mind to think so.

Today I'm also hoping to play some tennis and maybe get a picture I took of tacos printed. Yep. Someone asked me for a poster-sized print of pictures of tacos.

The taco cover comes out soon. And I have much work to do. A bunch of photography work. A bunch of writing. And a tour at some point.

This picture is printed right above my desk. Is from Tacos El Dorado in Playas. They only have birria and it's just decent, but it's a great picture.

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CHAPTER 21: BEER AND FUCK LA POLICE

Well, it fucking happened.

Tijuana has its negative sides. And yesterday was a myriad of bad decisions that led me to feeling like I feel right now. Fucking shitty.

First. I skipped work. I'm not sure why I scheduled Sunday, it's one of the worst days to cross the border. But I scheduled a photo shoot for Sunday. The line was a mess and I didn't get confirmation about the gig, so I emailed them to try to reschedule it. I was already on my way. I decided this outside Nelson. So I went inside Nelson and had a beer. Then I got a call that they were expecting me. Oh boy! Did I feel shitty. And that's the last call I ever got, because my phone was stolen by the police later that night.

iPhone SE paid 5,300 in pesos which is around \$300 USD. That was a couple years ago. Good phone. I needed an upgrade, but I wasn't planning on it this soon. And I also didn't want to lose my phone.

Beer. That's what happened.

Beer City.

Caguamas at Nelson are only 45 pesos. That's \$2.50 per liter of beer.

I had a couple at Nelson. Went to get a burger for 70 pesos, craft beer by Insurgente, the new double IPA Hops and Chill for 70 pesos, and then went home. Watched comedy stand-up (John Mulaney, it was alright) then decided it was time to go out for more beer.

Regular beers at Dandy del Sur are 25 pesos, or roughly \$1.50 per beer. Plus my

VIP card means I get a 2x1 on my first beer there every time. \$1.50 for two beers is a steal.

I saw Mapachito there. A tiny girl that I briefly dated that looks like a cartoon raccoon. I sat with her for a while and then her date arrived. A Russian/American guy whose name I forgot and it doesn't matter. He was also incredulous about how stupid cheap the beer was and talked about how in San Diego it would have been triple or more.

More beer at Nelson.

After the beer at Nelson, I was on my way home, but my dick decided that he wanted to be gay for the night. It saw long hair, nice ass, short skirt, and was like, "follow her, follow her," though my brain was like, "yo, that's obviously not a woman." So I followed her. Third time in that weird-ass gay bar with tons of trans women and male strippers. This was Sunday. It was way calmer.

I didn't get hit on. No one bought me a beer. I had two beers there while people watching. It was weird. I regret going. If I were gay, I would be there every night.

And on my way home, I got stopped by the cops.

I haven't been stopped by them in a while, probably more than a year. But it is common to get stopped by them in downtown at those hours at night.

Once, while walking with my boys from Minnesota, the cops stopped us and asked us if we had drugs on us. I told them no and that I lived just on the next block. Then the cop asked again: "are you sure you don't have drugs?"

YES, OFFICER, I DO NOT HAVE DRUGS ON ME.

What answer was he expecting? Oh shit, sorry officer, here's the weed I had.

Point is. I got stopped that night after the gay bar. I had nothing, but they wanted to search me. I was pretty drunk and just wanted to get it over with, so I let them search me.

They let me go right away.

A trans girl was nearby and she was telling me she wanted to suck my dick for cheap. I entertained the idea for a second, then I reached into my pockets for my phone to actually dismiss her and walk away.

FUCK MY PHONE IS FUCKING GONE.

Chick was like "vamos papi, te la chupo bien rico."

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And I was like... BITCH! Didn't you just see me get stopped by the cops! They took my phone! Help me! Then I realized she didn't give a single fuck and I also noticed her protruding mustache. Reality hit me hard.

FUCK MY PHONE!

FUCK MY FUCKING PHONE!

. . .

Beer city.

Danger city.

Fuck la police.

. . .

It could have been worse. I could have been arrested over nothing. I could have been robbed of more. I could even have been killed. Or even worse, gotten my dick sucked by a transgirl of the night.

It is a dangerous city and I was fucking around too much. Got too drunk. Skipped work. And spiraled down into oblivion.

Now I'm worried about work. And instead of looking for a new car, I'm looking for a new phone because the police stole mine. No. I didn't leave it at the gay bar. Nor was it stolen there. I am always on my phone and I don't lose shit no matter how drunk I get. I have miraculously woken up several times to find I have everything. Even though in a chapter before I mentioned how I lost my hoodie. There is a slight chance that it happened before the cops, but I'm certain it was the cops.

I distinctly remember playing Pokemon Go on my way home. I'm usually playing that game, and there are several pokestops on my way. There's a gym in La Catedral which is by my house, two blocks before the cop incident. I always stop by there and leave my Tyranitar or Donphan. I'm sure I tried that again.

Then the cops stopped me. It was a van, not a pick-up or a car, I remember I was

against the van. They searched my pockets. I said I had nothing, and walked away.

Phone gone. It's still offline.

Cops are famous for ripping off tourists. My old roommate got his rent money stolen once by the cops in plain daylight in the middle of downtown. I told him that was ridiculous and only happens if you are stupid. Now I was a victim of it.

I can't believe my phone is gone. I'm trying to track it. It's offline. My phone is most likely gone.

Fuck me.

The dangers of Tijuana beer city. Everything city.

And I'm going to extensively talk about beer. Beer is my favorite thing. Be it cheap ass Tecate or a nice sour or IPAs.

I claimed Tijuana has the best tacos in the world. Here's another ludicrous claim again.

Tijuana has the best beer in the world.

Recently, two beers from the area got bronze medals on the World Cup of Beer. I don't like either of the beers that won and they're definitely not the best beer in town, but at least they got a couple of bronze medals. More are sure to come.

San Diego claims to have some of the best beer in the world. We are their neighbors and little brother to the beer craze. The hop insanity started in the early '90s because of Stone Brewing and has extended throughout the world. And whatever trend San Diego does, Tijuana is quick to follow.

We are currently living in the hazy phase. NEIPAs (or New England Indian Pale Ale) started the trend. At first, I disliked it. It just looked and tasted like an IPA gone wrong. But now... now I'm starting to love them. They are doing interesting things with hazy beers. Very fruity. Many give me a guava juice feel. They are delicious and I'm loving it.

It was a weird weekend out of my weird life. Beer guide next. And say goodbye to all this text.

CHAPTER 21.5: BEER GUIDE

I wrote that last entry pretty drunk. I am still certain that the cops were the ones that took my phone. The last activity was at 2:37 a.m. spinning a Pokégym that's near my house. They detained me around the area. I posted at 3ish a.m. that my phone was stolen by the cops.

And because I've been saving for a car, I said fuck it, I'm going to get a nice fancy phone instead. And here I am, with my new device, that's also a camera, and... much more. A tiny \$1,000 computer in my pocket that I carry everywhere and we call it a "phone." I'm not comfortable knowing how stupid expensive this little gadget is. Which makes me want to return it. But it is an amazing gadget. And the camera is surreal. The future. A weird future. A really weird fucking future.

Time seems to shrink.

Or maybe I'm just getting busier.

I haven't had a single drink since the incident.

Well, that's a lie. I had a tequila drink. But that was during work. I was taking pictures of tacos and they served me a margarita that I thought was a virgin. It wasn't. It had tons of tequila.

I was thirsty. I drank half of it. But that's it. Three nights of not drinking and I'm proud as the first fish that walked out of the water and started breathing air. I do miss beer though. But my beer consumption has been excessive that I do need to moderate it heavily. Beer is so good and so cheap in this city. So, let's talk about that. Shall we?

• • •

Oh yeah. The photoshoot with the sexy chick didn't go well at all. I was too hungover.

The light wasn't great. We had the idea of taking pictures of her blowing a bubble with gum. She made weird faces while trying that. It wasn't good. She didn't like any of the pictures. I am not thoroughly enchanted with them either.

I'm not enchanted with her anymore. Awesome body. But she's not that sexy as I used to think she was, and she tends to annoy me real quick. I want to see her naked, but the effort doesn't seem worth it.

And now, my college friend from Minnesota is telling me that they are flying me over there for his sister's wedding. They want someone to...

Ahh but not too take pictures... They already hired two photographers for \$300 an hour. That's so much money. Nope. They wanted me to play guitar at the beginning of the wedding. But I haven't played guitar for so long. My guitar level is the lowest it has been in more than a decade. And that's what I studied in college. So it makes sense they wanted me to play guitar there.

But I can't. This is happening in less than a month and I don't have time to practice. I told them I was going to do photography way cheaper. Wedding photography is a crazy market though. They already booked the other two, and they probably have a ludicrous cancellation fee.

• • •

Oh sorry.

Beer.

It was Mamut Brewery Co. who started it all.

Cervecería Tijuana likes to say they were the first craft brewery in the city, and they are not wrong, but their beer is shit. Cervecería Tijuana has been brewing since the '90s. The generic name implies generic beers. And not only generic, they are not very good. They recently revamped their taproom and it looks impressive. They also redid their whole brand with new slogans and logos that aren't very impressive. Just like their beer and their names, generic. And poorly executed. Whoever did their taproom, that's good. Beyond good. But it's all make-up. Point being, you can skip Cervecería Tijuana.

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Mamut started with a little flag in a small art gallery in Pasaje Rodríguez in early 2012. I would walk by the Pasaje and see the flag and ask about beer. They never had beer. They would brew two kegs per month, sell for less than \$1, and be out of beer in a day or two.

Dry Stout and Hefeweizen I believe they brewed back then. Dry Stout was the popular one but ran out so quick it was rare if they had any left. They were basically the only craft beer around, except for the extensive breweries from the neighbors from up north, San Diego.

BCB or Baja Craft Brew also opened at that time. A bar that resembles hipster LA that gives out an industrial feel. They don't brew their own beer, but they started bringing crafts from all over the place. Great place, bad execution. Their menu is extensive, but you usually don't find half the beers they list. It is also on the expensive side. BCB also holds the title for the most popular bathroom in Tijuana. So many selfies in that bathroom. See, it has three-sided mirrors. So the reflection is pretty cool. I must admit I've taken a selfie in there while pissing. I never posted it since my penis was on the frame.

Mamut has exploded since then. The quality has been a rollercoaster, but the past year, a new brewer came to work there. A young kid that goes by the name "Ham." All his beers have been on point. Well, let's say 1 out of 10 is bad. And it used to be the other way around. 1 out of 10 would be good. That made a lot of people stop trusting Mamut. Including myself. They expanded too big, too soon, lost control of quality, went downhill, started getting heavily criticized, downsized, got better, and now it's expanding again.

Yes. Mamut has been a rollercoaster. The owner, Juan José, wanted to be the brewer. He has a passion for beer and his brewery, but he needed someone like Ham to put him on the right track. And he did. Ham ordered all new equipment, cleaned the fuck out of the old one, and now is just brewing excellent beer together with Juan. And I mean it. Lately, they've been having some of the best beers in the city. And there is a HEAVY competition in the Baja area for the best beer. Mamut is also one of the cheapest. They have a sizeable brewery and two taprooms in the heart of downtown Tijuana.

Juan José also has always been a patron of the arts. A patron of the city. Mamut

displays local art monthly or bi-monthly. They also have a nice space for concerts and they have been bringing important artists.

All in all, Mamut is great right now. It went through a long rough patch when their beers were undrinkable, but their recovery has been swift and great. Seriously, nothing is wrong with Mamut beers, from IPAs to Sours, to Stouts and Porters, to Lagers and whatever your heart desires. They also have Mezcal. And at some point wine. The food menu is decent. It's bad for a food snob like myself. But it's edible and cheap. Very cheap. So it's more than decent.

And Mamut is just touching the tip of the iceberg of the beer community here. And a lot of brewers/beer community probably hates me for mentioning Mamut as an important factor of Tijuana beer. After all, their beers were really complete shit for a long period. But Mamut was the first true craft brewery I experienced in Tijuana. Their tiny taproom in Pasaje Rodríguez is still one of my favorite hangouts.

Now for the rest.

The rest are a lot.

A fucking lot.

And there's not only Tijuana but the whole of Baja.

The top 5 players (not in a particular order). Insurgente and Border Psycho (TJ), Wendlandt and Agua Mala (Ensenada), and Fauna (Mexicali).

They are the top 5 players because they are the ones that can export to the US. They are all excellent, except Border Psycho. Their beers tend to be heavily alcoholic and you can taste it in a bad way. But they have also been getting better and they are widely popular because of their "naughty theme." Though they could also use a better graphic designer.

They could all use something better.

So let's review the top 5 breweries in the region, you should be able to find these beers all over California and in many other parts of the United States.

Insurgente is definitely the top player. I have never had a bad beer from them. Their theme is congruent and nice. There's just simply nothing wrong with them. They are pristine. They are the only ones that do merch, webpage, photos, beers, everything right.

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Except for their taproom. It's great beer and simply decorated, but it's TINY! And in Plaza Fiesta. And Plaza Fiesta, well, that's another story.

Juan Cordero, their hoppy pale ale, is my favorite Insurgente beer. Before that, Lupulosa was the best. But they also had a chain of sours that were superb. The Xocoveza is a collaboration with Stone Brewery, I'm not big into chocolate beers, but the best of Tijuana with the best of San Diego together, you know it's good. They just released Hops and Chill, their double IPA. I've tried it, but haven't made a note of it. Juan Cordero is still my favorite.

I am sure that by the time you read this, they'll have a bigger and better taproom and way more beers.

Border Psycho. Their first taproom was in Plaza Fiesta. It's still there... but I don't think it will last long. They recently opened another taproom in downtown Tijuana. It is much better. It has a decent menu, good burgers, good sopes (soh pehs), okay price. It's nice that the kitchen is open late. Their move to downtown Tijuana marks a trend that I see in the future of many breweries opening taprooms in downtown. By the time you read this, downtown Tijuana will have a couple dozen taprooms or more.

Like I said, Their beer is very alcoholic tasting and with good reason, they are mostly high alcohol beers. Even their collaboration with Mason Ale Works, Zonkey, an Imperial Coffee Stout, has a strong alcoholic taste. Many of their beers are above 8%.

They recently brewed Hoptimistic, which is a better IPA than their line beer, La Perversa a double IPA on the caramel, malty, and of course, heavy alcohol side. La Belga Sicitica, what they thought was a Belgian beer, is really a Black Saison. This beer, because it's called "La Belga" sounds like "La Verga" which means cock. This beer was the reason they started using dildos as their taps. It started with a big purple dildo at some beer festival (as one of the owners told me), but it graduated to nice glass dildos. Definitely a fun place, but not the best beers. They are improving and trust that they will be getting better.

Agua Mala or "Jellyfish," not "bad water." Just like Insurgente, there is never anything wrong with Agua Mala. The only thing I dislike is that their IPA (Astillero) claims to have 120+ IBUs. Anything above 80 is barely noticeable. And it's not even that

bitter, so I'm not sure how they got 120+. I prefer their Mako Pale Ale or their Sirena Pilsner. Astillero is still a delicious IPA.

They briefly opened a taproom in Plaza Fiesta with Mamut. That went downhill and now they don't have one in Tijuana. The Mamut taproom in Plaza Fiesta is also gone. The theme is "the ocean" so all their beers are related to sea events. Their brewery/taproom in Ensenada is less than a mile from the ocean and it has spectacular views. I've only visited once and didn't get to try the food menu, but it looked upscale and expensive. And again, their beers are all on point.

Wendlandt is also another one that never does anything wrong. I know. I know. I repeat myself. It's also a brewery/taproom I only visited once. And they weren't even opened yet (it was a private thing). They are also themed by the ocean as the brewery and taproom is right in front of the ocean.

My favorite by them is their Perro del Mar IPA. Awesome labels. A dog captain of the sea with an eye patch. Great stuff. Veraniega (a summery American ale) is a perfect light beer. And the Foca Parlante (chatting seal) is a great balanced oatmeal stout. And again, hilarious label with, a seal with a monocle and a pipe.

Fauna. Meaning. Fauna.

Speaking of awesome labels. Mother fucking Fauna has my favorite labels. All their labels have a magical and "animalistic" feel to it. Very nerdy.

I'm going to mention the IPA again as their best beer. Lycan Lupus. And the label? A werewolf in the forest destroying shit. They have a seasonal special beer call "Señor Matanza" a Russian Imperial Stout that only comes in a big bottle and a hefty price of \$15+. I tried one version and wasn't very impressed, but a lot of people love it whenever it comes out.

They closed their taproom in Plaza Fiesta. It was a magical place. Many of the beer labels were painted on the walls. They had a bartender that is one of the Mexican suicide girls that always gets naked for Instagram likes. I mean, on her IG account, you can pay her to send you private videos. Or she did back then.

She looks great in pictures and videos, but in real life, she's just a short girl with tattoos and big titties. Hot. But not as good as in pictures. Cool chick, though I barely

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have said a word to her except “I want that beer.” It makes me nervous to think I’ve already seen her naked and she has no idea who the fuck I am.

Too bad the taproom is gone. They only have a taproom in their brewery in Mexicali, and to this day, I STILL HAVEN’T VISITED MEXICALI, and I’ve been wanting too. Hopefully soon.

Owned by brothers Larios. Fauna is definitely one of the best breweries in the Baja region and I can’t wait for them to open another taproom in Tijuana. The brothers were painted as gnomes in the entrance of their taproom. Ahhh... it was a magical place but Plaza Fiesta got ruined.

And there you have it, the top 5 players beer in Baja. This doesn’t mean that they are the best. There are so many breweries here. Those are just the ones that you can find in the US and that they are usually available at liquor stores in the area. Basically, the ones that aren’t going anywhere. Many more are not going anywhere either.

About the death of Plaza Fiesta, I see it in the near future. El Tigre bar marked the trend of all craft breweries moving to that Plaza since the scene was dead and the craft beer scene needed a place to get established.

It’s still there hanging by a thread. The thread, Brew Pub Plaza, which used to be Paralelo 28 (I liked their old name better and now they have an alien theme), Madueño, Kaminari Secret Pub, and the tiny Insurgente.

Those are the ones still alive in Plaza. Border Psycho is still there... but they care more about their new taproom. Lúdica is gone. Fauna is gone. Donkey Punch (which was horrible) is also gone. Tres B (Big Bad Brew from Mexicali) is gone. Mamut is gone. Agua Mala is gone. Legion is gone. Ramuri is gone. I think small players like Vibra still hold their spot in the back.

So, Plaza Fiesta used to host many craft breweries, and now they are mostly gone.

Madueño and Kaminari make more than excellent beers and they seem stubborn to stay in Plaza, but I’m sure they’ll end up in downtown.

The last one to leave is going to be Brew Pub Plaza. It’s in their name. Unless they change the name.

So, why did all the brewers leave? Why did Plaza Fiesta turn to shit? Well, it turned into Plaza Fiesta. Party party party. The people saw that the party mall was getting full, a lot of people started renting the empty spaces and doing their own shit bars. And by shit bars, I mean real shit bars. With shit beer, shit drinks, shit cocaine, and worse of it all, SHIT MUSIC. And at unbearable loudness levels. Each bar competes to see who can be the loudest and all the music clashes against each other creating dissonance and shitty drunk people.

Plaza Fiesta became where people go get stupid wasted with the least money possible. Mostly, people under 25. It’s still a great party, but not for me.

I am barely there after dark. Last time I was there I stopped by Madueño and their Hops and Dreams is still as great as ever. I had the great luck to meet Kaminari at his secret pub and drink a bunch of his beers. Dude knows what he is doing as well. Amazing sours, try the Gose de Pepino called “Zague.”

And an honorable mention. Cervecería Colima. Nowhere near Baja California, but they are aware that the big beers are here. You find Colima beer in many places. And their distributor is a friend of mine, so I get to try a lot of their beers.

Roca Partida collaboration with Insurgente, Ballast Point, Rise and Win Brewing Co (Japan), and Baja Brewing Co was one of the best beers I’ve had in my life. And I don’t even like porters very much, but this one had oyster which gave it a chocolate salty taste that was unique. Too bad it was a limited beer and we will probably never see it again. It was delicious.

An extra honorary mention. Sotano Suizo and Bosiger. They aren’t moving from la Plaza, they’ve been there since the 80s. Their beer hasn’t impressed me, and in general, I don’t like the place. But it’s a classic Tijuana standard that I doubt will be going anywhere in the following decade.

And this concludes beer of Baja. Sort of.

And this concludes all the stupid shit I write. Sort of.

I didn’t even mention Norte Brewing Co. I’m painted on the mural inside that brewery.

• • •

CHAPTER 22: CONCLUSION

I just turned 32-years-old. Facebook posts from friends and people I haven't talked to in years are posting congratulations on my wall.

I usually hate my birthday. People give too much importance to it. Which puts pressure on having a good time. But it's just a day. Worse. It's a Wednesday. And I have some work to do. Work that I don't want to do.

Last birthday, I got drunk as fuck early during the day and passed out in the early afternoon. I don't know why birthdays depress me.

This year, I'm just trying to let it be. I don't feel as depressed as other birthdays past.

I don't understand people that like their birthdays.

What is to like about getting older?

Count it.

I've lived for 11, 680 days. Toddler years don't really count.

I've lived for 9855 days. It seems like a waste.

What's next?

Nothing is next. The same as always. Beer and tacos. Beer and tacos. Beer and tacos.

• • •

I read all I wrote for the past months. I repeat myself a lot.

I repeat myself a lot.

I repeat myself a lot.

Many stories are missing. Many bachelor parties blend into one. I got three emails about bachelor parties this week. That's not a common occurrence.

I just rejected one. They wanted a tour for this Friday. Replied that I'm booked. I'm not really booked. I just didn't like the way he emailed me. Also, he wanted a bachelor party and strip clubs, no mention of craft beers or fancy food.

I feel like I am retiring from those.

I'm not sure what I'm going to do with my tours.

I'm not sure what I'm doing with all this crap I'm writing.

I do have to work Saturday morning. So fuck doing a bachelor tour Friday night.

Next tour is in a week. Old couples. Much more my speed. Craft beer, street tacos, fancy eats, Tijuana views, and perhaps a dive bar.

No more craziness.

Ted's Story.

One last crazy bachelor story.

We had to carry Ted across the border. This was probably my favorite bachelor party. I was hired by the best man, who had a Chinese name. I was nervous that it was going to be an all Chinese tour.

Nah. Of course, they were Chinese Americans. And not all of them. It was around 8 guys, half of them were white boys.

My bachelor tours blend so much, that I don't remember if one of the white boys was a reformed yoga teacher. I'm thinking that's from a different tour, but for the sake of this story, he was a part of that group.

The yoga white boy had long greyish beard and hair, wore sandals, and other hippie bullshit. Apparently, he was recently married and he had all been doing his yoga persona for a couple of years. Before that, he was a businessman that was always clean-shaven and it was all about the money.

Yoga white boy was quiet for most of the tour. Barely drinking. Being a hippy. Peacefully observing the bachelor party mess.

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It wasn't much of a mess. It was the classics. Tacos, beers, cocktails, tequila shots for the bachelor, party, party, party.

And then, to the strip clubs!

We got to Hong Kong and I grab a table for the whole group. Then took a couple of the guys and the bachelor, Ted, to get him a couple of girls. That's what I usually do at bachelor parties. Grab the best man or a couple of the guys in the party, find hot girls for the bachelor, sit him down, and let him enjoy the first lap dance with two or more girls on top of him.

From there on, the party always splits and they do their own debauchery. With Ted, we walked to the back. He sat down where they were doing the show de espuma. I'm going to repeat myself once more. Show de espuma is two or more naked chicks covered in shaving cream that you can finger for a dollar. It's nasty.

It's really fucking nasty. I went with a good friend from my hometown when he came for a short visit years ago. It was Monday, so not much was open and I always have to show people that are new to Tijuana to Hong Kong. The first girl we saw had the most beautiful pussy I've seen, no panties. Just pussy. I remember my friend's face lit up like he just saw the face of god and it only cost him one dollar to see it.

Later that same night, I remember watching the show de espuma, but not watching the girls, just watching the audience. The wolf hungry audience. 25-30 horny men salivating at two naked young girls. Throwing money.

I am sure the girls there are on drugs. This shit is a bit extreme. \$5 and you can grab a dildo and go to town with them. Guys sometimes delve in and lick the pussy that is covered in shaving cream while the girls slide around the stage for another guy to do the same. So many dirty fingers being shoved in exchanged for money, and then they lick that...

That's the show de espuma.

You can understand why I want to retire from this...

Another story that went missing was with some Canadians. Just three guys. Not a bachelor party. Just a Tijuana Adventure that ended in Hong Kong. Many tours ended up there and not necessarily were they bachelor parties.

One of the three Canadians was an extremely good looking dude. We were

drinking beers at Plaza Fiesta, because back then, Plaza Fiesta was actually good. Two cute short Mexican girls approached him (and his friend) while I was talking to the Moroccan-Canadian dude. The girls were really cute, and the dude blew them off. And after asked me, "those were hookers, right?"

NO DUDE! They weren't! They were two cute girls that wanted you...

That night... we did end up in Hong Kong with hookers... The Moroccan-Canadian dude was so happy spending \$5 to grab a dildo and go to town with the girls in the show de espuma. He thought it was two pumps and done. NOPE! You can really go to town with them. More than a full minute dildoeing a naked girl in public for \$5.

The Moroccan-Canadian dude came back. My tours blend so much and I've done plenty that I didn't even notice him. It was halfway through the tour that he was like, "yo, remember me? We toured together before!" And I came to the realization of who he was. He was with a different group.

Fucking tours.

Well, Ted sat in front of the show de espuma. I told his friends to give him money so I can give it to Ted so he can go to town. I yelled at the girls on the show de espuma that it was his bachelor party and show them a \$20. They didn't hesitate. They knew there was more money to be thrown. One of them instantly climbed on Ted covering the poor guy on shaving cream and the other said: "let's grab him and put him on stage."

So I helped Ted go on stage and told his friends near me that this is going to get out of control.

They stripped Ted down to his underwear. Ted was wasted. He was loving the stage and did a little dance with the girls. Then they laid him down on his back, one climbed on his face, and the other climbed on his cock with boxers still on. And they started grinding and performing other things...

When this shit started to happen, I ran to the table that was at the other far end of the strip club to tell all of Ted's friends what was going on.

They all went to check it out, leaving behind sunglasses, jackets, and other stuff on the table. So I stayed behind with the best man. We discuss what will happen in the next few hours for the bachelor party and while figuring shit out, we saw him. Ted was running around the strip club down to his underwear covered in shaving cream,

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literally running like a little kid, screaming “I AM GETTING MARRIED TOMORROW WOOOO I AM GETTING MARRIED TOMORROW!!!!”

It was a hilarious view.

The bachelor party kept going. Ted kept getting wasted. At some point, we thought we had lost him. And that's when we saw him with a girl that was trying to take him up to the room though he was WASTED beyond capabilities of deciding what to do. Luckily, we found him and stopped him. The girl was pissed, but Ted gave her some money anyway.

Not even at midnight and it was time to go back. We had to carry Ted to the border. Poor guy couldn't walk.

What happened with the white yoga hippy dude? Well, that was a different tour. But the point of that hippy dude was that I ended up losing him on that tour.

He was supposedly the calmest most chill dude. But when we arrived in Hong Kong, he disappeared. I didn't hear from him that night. I had to split the party in two. Part of the party stayed in Hong Kong while I took the rest to the border.

I was told that they found him hours later. Apparently, he went up to the rooms with a couple of girls. And repeated. And repeated.

Hippy dude had a thing for threesomes.

. . .

And that's barely a tip on the iceberg of what Tijuana can provide.

Libertarian hedonism stuck in fake progress.

So much change, so little change, the dollar still rules supreme.

Anarchy. Drugs. Sex. Sleepless City. Murder. Drugs. Drugs. Sex. Sex.

Craft Beer. Fancy Baja-Med cuisine. Amazing street tacos.

. . .

I just got an email asking about barbershops. There are so many barbers in this city. It's wild how many barbers there. A tour client that later became a friend comes from Los Angeles to get a haircut and his beard shaven. The fucker can't even grow a beard!

But he still comes for the weekend with that excuse. Then he just enjoys the city.

And enjoy the city I will. It's my birthday, which doesn't really mean crap. I want to play tennis again. I've been playing tennis with my buddy. Yes. I won the first game... and the last two... We tied!

We had a tie-breaker on the one before last, and I think I won... But it was more of a tie.

And this last game, it was just a straight-up tie. One set each. Third set and the score was 6-6. Instead of playing the tiebreaker... we just left it at that. It was also getting dark that we could barely see the ball.

Then we had beers, more beers, saw a couple friend, told them it was my birthday, more drinks, a couple of joints, and then home. With el Pinche Tony. I barely beat him on tennis, but I owned him on Super Smash Bros. I beat him with Jigglypuff against Cloud.

Jigglypuff!

CHAPTER 22.5. TOUR REVIVALS, CHANGES, AND MORE BEER.

Well, it's happening!

I wrote a book and I decided to try and publish it through Amazon. I wrote this whole thing in early 2018 and for the past few weeks, I have been editing, re-reading, editing, and deleting the dumb lines that I put everywhere. I also hired a model to be on the cover of the book and hired a designer to, uhh, design it.

I haven't paid either. I need to sell a few copies to pay them both.

• • •

Changes. Tijuana has had a lot of them. I had a ton of them. The biggest one was that I lost my mom, so all those instances I mentioned her will not come true. But this is not a sad book. It's a TJ book. One that recalls all the crazy stuff I've done in this city and this city has done to me.

Not so changes. I'm still working for the Magazine. Last year I worked for them more than ever. Helping in everything from sales, photography, writing, events, marketing, social media, and distributing. This year I'm doing a bit less.

Changes and not changes. I did stop doing tours for a while. At least paid tours. Because friends still keep visiting this city and I keep doing tours. I am now painted in two murals (as a small character, but hey, still painted on walls). It's part of my tours to get my picture taken by the painting of myself. Oh yeah. I am reviving the tours in 2020.

I'm still not sure where I am going with it, but I already did two tours. More expensive. That is one of the things that will change for sure.

Changes. Tijuana has changed a lot in those two years. Like I predicted, Plaza Fiesta turned to shit. Barely any breweries survive there. Only go there if you want to party with kids. And by kids, I mean people younger than 25. Madueño is still in Plaza, but he is opening in downtown soon. By the time you read this. Madueño Brewing is in Zona Centro.

Changes. In fact, all the breweries are moving to Zona Centro. And this is where this chapter is going soon.

Re-reading all I wrote, I can say I lied three times. Not really lied, more like hid details or change them to be milder than I actually was. One was in the Hong Kong chapter. The sex on stage didn't go like I described it. It was similar. But the act was different. Going back through it all, the beer section is still incomplete. Beer is still my favorite. Beer is still growing.

Changes. All of downtown is changing rapidly. Growing in reality. Places that were abandoned are getting refurbished and rebuilt. More on this at the end of this.

Tour revival.

I've been getting emails throughout my not doing tours asking me for tours. I have politely declined and pointed them towards other tour guides. I wonder if their Tijuana tours ever became as adventurous as mine.

In 2020, I decided to go back to doing tours but I'm going to try to be more expensive. The first tour that hit me up was a bachelor party that hasn't happened. So it is still to come. They seem relaxed though. There are three women coming to the bachelor party, so I doubt that crazy strip club shit will happen. I accepted this tour. It is yet to be 100% confirmed.

Changes. The whole strip club scene has changed as well. Zona Norte is as popular and as grosser as ever. I rarely go there.

I got three more emails for other tours. One was for immediately the next day on a Sunday. I rejected because I was already booked and it sounded complicated. The other was immediately for a Monday and I didn't want to do it, but he offered more money

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than my original offer. So I took it. The last email was for a solo Saturday tour with what I thought was a white lady in her 40s discovering Tijuana. That email chain grew and grew until it became the lady, her sister, and way more tour than what I originally agreed too.

The first tour I accepted was very calm. It was a dude from Los Angeles who worked as a successful writer for Nickelodeon and other movies (he has a proficient IMDB). He is also an amazing photographer doing a lot of street photography. So the tour was concentrated on that. It was a very short notice and I'm not sure if I did a good job. I hope he comes back and does it again.

The tour lasted less than four hours. I got paid. And before 5:00 pm it was over and I had already been drinking and my tourist was driving back to Los Angeles.

Early in 2020. Easy tour. Easy money. If it was only always like that...

The Second tour was nothing like that. I was wrong. They weren't older white ladies. They were two Mexican girls from California that reminded me of the Latina girls that went to my college. Pochas. And they say "tbh" way too much. Every other sentence they had to say "tbh."

Not changes. I wake up way too late and drink way too much still. Yesterday, I didn't drink. That's the third day of the year that I haven't (only three weeks this year so far). My insides hurt when I drink every now and then. I'm getting old. Tijuana Adventure is going to kill me. I drank a lot with those two girls. The original idea was to just meet one of them on a Saturday afternoon and tour her for a while. It sounded like a date. I didn't want it to be a date.

Confessions of a Tour guide. I've slept with two of my clients. So not only a mini-pimp. I'm also a prostitute. One has blocked me from everything and I haven't heard from her in forever. She was a short cute redhead. Older than me. And she was amazing.

She also had a boyfriend and two kids. One of her kids was turning 18. She came on a tour with one of her friends. I knew she liked me. It's not the first time it happens in my tours. But I keep my distance and try to pretend I'm not into it. A bit halfway through the tour, at Mamut Brewery, she pulled me into a bathroom that was under construction by the end side of the brewery. And she just threw herself at me. We almost did it there.

But no.

Her friend was still waiting and told her that I was her tour guide. And we did stop. Except that she came to visit me a few weeks after that. And that was a great weekend in which I can keep the details for myself. My memory of when I saw her for the second time makes me happy though. I went to see her at her Airbnb and as soon as she saw me, she took her bathrobe off. It was amazing. It was a great weekend. She was awesome.

And then, months later. I never heard from her again and I can't look her up. She gave me two books. I still have them. I still haven't read them. I have a pile of books that I never read that I tell myself I will.

The other one I also adored. She is married now. And I always wonder if that could have been me. This one was on a wine tour with a group. She got drunk really fast because she is a tiny woman and right away fell to my arms. We didn't do anything on that tour. It was a big group and I kept my distance.

A few weeks later, she booked me for another tour. This time it was only her and a friend. And compared to the group tour, this one went wild. It involved some Hong Kong and what not. And we hooked up. They paid me for the tour. I gave them their money back. She doesn't remember that I gave her her money back.

We dated for a while after that. I really liked her. A lot. It was everything I was looking for. Bicultural. She spoke two languages. Tiny. Super smart. Beautiful. Great fashion taste. Good cook. Funny. And she loved me. Sex was great too.

But I'm a fucking idiot. Little things made me not want to date her and I let her go. It's for the best though. She's happily married now and I sit jealously looking at her social media wondering if that could've been me.

I slept with these two Latina sisters. They have names. Jessica and Jocelyn. Not the way you think though. The tour was not supposed to go like that at all. Instead of just having a fancy dinner and taking them back to their Airbnb, we ended up having street tacos, going for a couple of drinks, then I took them to the gay bar. To Hawaii. Two pretty girls sat next to me. And they were girl girls. The trans women were on the other side of the bar. A fat old man with a big mustache, a button-up shirt halfway unbuttoned, and round glasses sat at the bar. He was making out with a pretty trans,

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though with hairy arms. At some point, she left and left the man alone. He looked sad after.

The girls asked for drag shows, that's why I brought them there. That's not what we got. When we entered, Paquita la del Barrio was on stage. As soon as Paquita went off stage, a ripped short dude covering only his torso and face started to strip what little he had.

The girls yelled "WOOOO" involuntarily. Jocelyn was louder than her sister. I told her about this and she said she didn't even notice yelling that much. And when the dicks came out. More WOOO! I tried to chat up the pretty girls next to me. Jocelyn was telling me to take them home. As if it were that easy. I am sure they work at the other strip clubs and they were on their night off. In the meantime, Jessica was horny for absolutely every dude. She pointed at the dude she liked and I had to go grab him, offered him \$5 to give Jessica a lapdance and, well, \$5 is way more than you bargain for.

Sort of like in Hong Kong \$5 gets you a good minute of using a dildo on a girl, \$5 got a ripped dude on top of Jessica grinding on her and spreading her legs, and grinding some more.

They loved the place. As they yelled "woooo!" and said "tbh" way too much. Over and over and over. We ended the night way later than we should have. At least their Airbnb was nearby. Jessica was trying to get a dude's number, the dude told her he was bi. He looked really gay. Everyone in that place is really gay. Jessica was convinced, and I had to remind her that they are actually gay hookers. Maybe he wouldn't have charged, but I'm leaning towards he would have. That's their job.

I walked them to their Airbnb at 2 or 3 a.m. I can't even remember. But then they told me to just stay over. The bed wasn't big enough, but I was tired. I took the offer. Jocelyn took half the bed. Jessica took the rest while cuddling me and requesting me to move and cuddle more. I slept for 20 minutes before I woke up and thought, "this was a mistake." I didn't feel safe leaving the area at 3ish a.m. though, so I stayed there telling my brain to just go to sleep. I couldn't. 6 a.m. hit. I went home and slept with my cats.

And then there was the second part of the tour. I saw them the next day. I took them to Teléfonica because everyone loves Teléfonica and I already mentioned it in this book a handful of times. Left them back in their new Airbnb for them to get ready in

dresses and heels and whatnot.

Met them at Insurgente Brewery. BEER! I'm getting there. The kitchen just opened, it's called "El Casimiro." I have no idea how long they will last. But they have breaded cheeseballs of birria that are delicious. It's the chef's fourth or fifth project. It's already getting very popular in the city. And it's at Insurgente which is amazing!

After that, we went to the Tijuana Jazz Club. That's also new and didn't exist when I started writing all of this. They are doing an alright job for now. Getting good musicians. It's a good vibe. But there is a lot missing. I trust that they will keep improving on it.

On top of that, they opened Verde y Crema. It used to be a popular restaurant in La Cacho, but they moved their whole operation to downtown. I've only had it once and I liked it plenty. No idea if they are going to last. Tijuana is mysterious like that.

We didn't go to that.

Instead, we went to a private party inside the newest apartment high-rise "Distrito Revolución." That building also didn't exist when I started writing this. It was I Wanna Beer With You's private party. That's an Instagram of a couple of girls that drink beer. The party was on the last floor which has great views. The girls met someone from the OC. They came from OC. They were excited.

And after that... More Hong Kong! I mean Hawaii!

I told the girls I wanted to go home at around 10 p.m. It was nearing midnight and I was still there as Jessica told me to stay for another beer and another beer and another beer. At some point, Jocelyn got really mad at Jessica. I blame the alcohol. But it got awkward. And I told them again and again that I had to leave. I had no choice but to leave them.

They fought. But I texted them both and they are both alright and back home. Not the ending Tijuana Adventure was supposed to have, but that's how it ended. On future tours, fuck do I know what's going to happen.

. . .

Now, more beer.

TIJUANA ADVENTURE: CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

Most importantly, Norte Brewing Company. The cover picture of the book is in that place. The model is Amayrani. I've known her for years because she used to bartend in several places. She sells prints of her nudes and posts plenty of sexy content on Instagram. Follow her as @amayraven.

I am painted on the walls of Norte. I'm the only non-staff member painted on the walls. I'm standing tall on a building next to a titty. Most appropriate. The titty is of a giant naked woman that is a house in Tijuana. It's a popular Tijuana landmark that I have never bothered to take a tour inside. The architect is a weirdo. I had to interview him once.

Norte used to be a strip club. Just like Teléfonica, I take everyone to Norte. I usually have a stupid joke that I left something in my car and I have to take the whole tour inside this parking lot to grab something. They all look disappointed that I have to take them through a shitty parking lot and of me for being a shitty tour guide. But no! Norte is inside the parking lot and it opens to some of the best views of the city. Hence, the cover of my book was there.

I've been a patron of Norte since its inception. Their beers are fair standards. Nothing is going to blow your mind but nothing is going to disappoint. The same could be said about the food. Everything is just well done. I usually get whatever hoppiest beer, though one of their best beers is their porter on nitro. Almost all their beers have names related to what used to be the strip club, like: Escort, Bunny, Penthouse (former name of the strip club), Golden Shower, Spank Me, Grace (former stripper there), Threesome, and more that they keep adding.

Go there for sunset. Enjoy one or two beers. And move along to the rest of downtown beers.

All the breweries are moving to downtown. Insurgente just moved to downtown. That's not all you need to know but that's all you need to know. The best brewery is in downtown. Right below Norte on the corner of Fourth and Revolución. That corner has seen many businesses come and go, but Insurgente is there to stay unless something goes horribly wrong. They are currently fighting with the local government. In front of Insurgente, they plan to build the biggest building in downtown.

It wasn't Insurgente who marked the trend that downtown was going to be next. It was Border Psycho who first moved to the almost corner of Calle Segunda and Revolución. They are the closest brewery to all the debauchery. It's a perfect spot for lost Gringos. They have been doing a great job there with a few mistakes. They have new beers that are better than the ones a few years ago. Their menu comes and goes but it is decent. Their current bartender blows. Not the tall dude that looks like Hagrid. The dude is great. Some chick that dislikes me and always has an attitude. Border Psycho also opened in Playas with a beer collective called Playami. It has the five big players I mentioned before. They moved all their best staff over there and have been paying more attention to that than to their taproom in downtown. But they closed their taproom in Plaza Fiesta. Everything in Plaza Fiesta has closed.

Insurgente closed and now Kaminari is in their place in Plaza Fiesta. Kaminari is great but that taproom sucks. I wouldn't be surprised if he moves to downtown as well just like Madueño did.

There are two new places that I have no idea who they are. Mestizo on Calle Sexta. I tried all their beers. They were all infected probably with diacetyl. I will give them another chance later.

Another place opened in what used to be Mexitlan. They sucked and I don't remember their name but the location is prime. If they can make it work they will have something fantastic. As it is now, it is not worth it.

What's Mexitlan? Mexitlan is a legend of Tijuana. I never went. But they used to have miniature cities and it was a place of legendary concerts. Or so I'm told. Tijuana had many legendary concerts.

More places are opening up. I was just in a new one yesterday called "Los Cervezartistas." It's a beer collective that is doing more than alright. Their SMASH Citra beer is a well-done Citra beer. The tap-room is brand new but they have a nice collection of beers in the fridge and it looks promising for the future.

I forgot about Teorema/Lúdica. They share a spot in front of Cine Tonalá. It's the trendy hipster spot but it is very good. Lúdica also opened their own tap-room in the same place they brew, but that is really far. Teorema still brews in the same spot and they tend to go up and down, more up than down, so it's usually very good.

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Bajer opened next door to them. That's from a dude that married a chick from Denmark. Bajer means beer in Danish. The brewery/tap-room is also brand new, growing, and they are very experimental. But the good news is that they have the money to make it work and they are not going anywhere. They have a Viking theme to their brewery and the art comes from the dude's mom. The art is one of my favorite art galleries I have seen in the city, though who knows if it will be there when you visit. They are closed right now and I am guessing they are absorbing the bar next door that used to be for junkies and a place where you can smoke weed no problem.

Those places are closing. The legendary Zacazonapan closed in late 2019.

Oh. I guess Funes brewery is out here as well. I still haven't had a good beer from them despite their many years.

Cerveceria Mexica is also out here. Their place is lovely, next to the Tijuana Jazz Club. But their beers need work. It's almost there. Almost. I know they will be good and that they are not going anywhere.

Oh. And Teléfonica has its own brewery now called Lírica. It's the brewer's fourth-placed and his best so far, the others weren't that great. I still need to try all their

beers, Teléfonica has such a great selection that it is tough to grab the local one.

I am probably forgetting some breweries. Or more will open by the time this is out. República Malta is out there... that's a collective of breweries. I don't think it will last. Madero Tasting Room is out there. Tello, the guy that owns that place really knows beer, so I hope he lasts for a while. And there are rumors of more places. And rumors of others closing.

Tijuana is constantly changing.

And this is seriously the end of this.

If you want more, you'll have to come on a Tijuana Adventure with me. Most likely, many things will be different.

Thanks for reading. And happy adventuring!